Reviews of Thomas Hardy's Poetical Works

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Country Life
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All of us will look forward eagerly for the publication of Mr. Thomas Hardy's book of poems, embodying some fifty pieces of verse, written at various times during the past thirty years. Moreover, there is the greatest curiosity as to the probable contents of the volume. The *Academy*, quoting Mr. Lane, tells us that the greater part of Mr. Hardy's early work in verse was destroyed by him some years ago. It would seem, then, that most of the poems must be of recent date. Yet *Literature* speaks of thirty years. It may be that the mere paper perished but the verses lived in the memory of the poet.

Pall Mall Gazette,

Cutting from issue dated Jan. 6 1899

REVIEWS.

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.*

It is inevitable that when a man who has gained great distinction in one order of letters publishes a book in another, he should be told that his effort is creditable, but to be taken merely as a curiosity. Mr. Hardy must have expected such a verdict, and, to be frank, we think it might have been plausibly passed even if his verses had been better than they are—taken strictly as verses. But at the same time we demur to the verdict that he is not a poet or cannot write poetry. What he lacks is mainly the faculty of the verse-maker. He has the feeling of a poet—we knew that from his novels—and is by no means without the faculty of finding the right, the necessary word. But he has little sense of rhythm, it would seem, and little sense of music. His verses are halting and jerky. It follows that if the poetry of sound and melody be in question, the poetry of which Mr. Swinburne is the greatest English master, at least in these latter years, Mr. Hardy's place is somewhere near the bottom of the list; but if the poetry of thought is in question—of thought partially divorced from musical expression—the poetry of which Browning was a typical practitioner, then Mr. Hardy's place is very different. The greatest poetry is a combination of the two, it may be, but if the poetry of mere thought be allowed at all, if Browning was a great poet, then assuredly Mr. Hardy may claim a respectable place.

Perhaps his most obvious fault is the failure to recognize that innumerable commonplaces of expression, though not to be excluded from good prose, or even altogether from prose of the finest sort, are hardly to be admitted into verse. Mr. Hardy disdains to change them. Another fault is the rough hacking and involution of phrases to make them fit his metres—the fault of Browning before him. But, like Browning also, when the happy accident of directness fitting his metre attends him, he can be beautifully and strongly direct. The best poem in this regard, and altogether, we think, the best in the book, is "My Cicely." It is a fairly long one, but there is hardly a stanza in it that is not apt and forcible. So, also, is the little poem "Unknowing," a beautiful and haunting expression of an idea.

But we have said enough of expression. The matter of Mr. Hardy's is more interesting. Bating a few little cheerful poems, chiefly observations of essentially "Wessex" people and things, the note of all is sad—sad and strange. He tells of rejected celibates and injured husbands, not of happy lovers; of age, not of youth; of death, not of life. And he tells of all this in a mood of wistful appreciation and of curious fancy. "Friends Beyond" is a strange, calmly pessimistic fancy. The old familiars of a village come back in ghostly fashion to the poet, and they rejoice in their state—but rejoice because they have no feeling for the wrong that is done after them. "The Dance at the Phœnix" is written in a spirited manner, and it tells of the dancing of an old woman—attracted by the return to "Casterbridge" of the regiment which had supplied the light loves of her youth—and of her dying afterwards of heart-disease. The matter of "My Cicely" requires another word. A man in London rides down to the West, hearing that the love of his youth was dead: he finds that the dead woman merely had her name, and he rejoices. Afterwards he finds that the real Cicely has met with worse than death, and then he persuades himself that it is she, after all, who is dead. The fancy is strange and a good example of Mr. Hardy's mood in these poems—intensely melancholy and yet with a curious sombre comfort. We need not detail any others. We have detailed so much that the reader might know if he is likely to be pleased, since it is easy to prophesy in this case; there is little, very little to please the ear, but much to please the mind that is capable of the charm of melancholy. In his preface Mr. Hardy modestly deprecates his drawings as being inserted merely for the local interest, but many of them have besides the merit of much architectural skill.

* "Wessex Poems, and Other Verses." By Thomas Hardy. With thirty illustrations by the Author. (London and New York: Harper and Brothers.)

Cutting from the Westminster Gazette
Dated January 11 1899

MR. HARDY AS A POET.*

When a man eminent in one branch of literature tries his hand at another, he is inevitably treated as an interesting amateur. Thus it is with Mr. Hardy and his volume of verse called "Wessex Poems." There is no reason in the nature of things why a novelist should not be a poet. One living writer of fiction at all events, Mr. George Meredith, has enriched the language with memorable poems. A dozen instances suggest that great writers of prose can, if they choose, be great poets. Now, there is abundance of poetry in Mr. Hardy's prose-works, and if poetry is a criticism of life, who so qualified to make it as a writer who has all his days been a critic of life? The answer shows the imperfections of this definition of poetry. Mr. Hardy's poems have interest and poignancy as criticisms of life. They are full of ideas, they pierce to the heart of things, they deal with dramatic situations. That being the case, they must be taken seriously. Yet often they lack the lyric impulse, and oftener they are clumsy in execution and harsh in sound. Curiously enough Mr. Hardy chiefly fails when he is telling a story in verse. We cannot take seriously the story of the peasant who tells how he lost the battle of Waterloo by misleading and killing the officer who was taking orders from Napoleon to Grouchy. The illusion is spoilt by a conviction at the back of our minds that Napoleon of all men would never have left so vital a matter in the hands of one garrulous officer. Again, how much better the novelist would have told the dramatic story of "The Burghers" in one of "Life's little Ironies"? Mr. Hardy's ballad-verse is often clumsy and sticky. Yet there is one exception, the "dance at the Phœnix," which is admirably spirited and original. Jenny, aged fifty-nine, once a madcap girl, but now a sober granny, finds her old self suddenly stirred to life by the arrival in the village of "the King's Own Cavalry," those heroes of her girlhood. They give a ball, and the sounds of their dance-music come across the street to where Jenny lay:

That night the throbbing "Soldier's Joy,"
The measured tread and sway
Of "Fancy-Lad" and "Maiden Coy,"
Reached Jenny as she lay
Beside her spouse; till springtide blood
Seemed scouring through her like a flood
That whisked the years away.

She rose, and rayed, and decked her head
To hide her ringlets thin;
Upon her cap two bows of red
She fixed with hasty pin;
Unheard descending to the street,
She trod the flags with tune-led feet,
And stood before the Inn.

Arrived at the Phœnix she has one last great fling:

Hour chased each hour, and night advanced;
She sped as shod with wings
Each time and every time she danced—
Reels, jigs, poussettes, and flings;
They cheered her as she soared and swooped,
(She'd learnt ere art in dancing drooped
From hops to slothful swings).

But, alas, poor Jenny! her fifty-nine years take their revenge. The lads escort her home at the end of it all, and she creeps back to bed beside her husband, there to die with an agony at the heart. He finds her in the morning dead, and no one ever told him that she had left his side that night.

If the volume contained only this piece, we should be grateful for it. But there are others of remarkable interest, such as "My Cicely" (as admirable in workmanship as painful in idea), "The Two Men," "The Heiress and the Architect"—a more pessimistic version of the Palace of Art—the "Fire at Tranter Sweatley's"—an excellent Doric narrative—"The Friends Beyond." What could be better than these four stanzas from the last of these poems:

William Dewy, Tranter Reuben,
Farmer Ledlow late at plough,
Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,
And the Squire, and Lady Susan, lie in Mell-
stock Churchyard now!

"Gone," I call them, gone for good, that
group of local hearts and heads;
Yet at mothy curfew-tide,
And at midnight when the noon-heat breathes
it back from walls and leads,
They've a way of whispering to me—
fellow-wight who yet abide—

In the muted, measured note
Of a ripple under archways, or a lone
cave's stillicide:

"We have triumphed: this achievement
turns the bane to antidote,
Unsuccesses to success,
Many thought-worn eves and morrows
to a morrow free of thought,

"No more need we corn and clothing,
feel of old terrestrial stress;
Chill detraction stirs no sigh;
Fear of death has even bygone us; death
gave all that we possess."

The thought here is felt, and the expression singularly beautiful.

Many thought-worn eves and morrows
To a morrow free of thought.

is a couplet to haunt one as the best verse should. There is a touch of Swinburne here which is hardly obscured by Mr. Hardy's odd way of printing the lines. There is not always such felicity. In "Her Immortality" we have a charming idea weighted by several of the clumsiest possible stanzas. Thus:

"You draw me, and I come to you,
My faithful one," she said,
In voice that had the moving tone
It bore in maidenhead.

She said: "'Tis seven years since I died:
Few now remember me;
My husband clasps another bride;
My children mothers she.

"Maidenhead" for maidenhood is, really, an absurd sacrifice for a rhyme. Read the stanza aloud and anyone would suppose that the lady lived in Maidenhead. Then, again, the doggerel trick of putting "she" at the end of the line—often repeated in this volume—is very tiresome. We do not complain so much of Mr. Hardy's pessimism, gloomy and obstinate as it is, as of the unmusical expression which it too often obtains. Take this, for instance, from Nature's Questionings:

Has some Vast Imbecility,
Mighty to build and blend,
But impotent to tend,
Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry?

"Or come we of an Automaton
Unconscious of our pains?
Or are we live remains
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye now gone?

"Or is it that some high Plan betides
As yet not understood,
Of Civil stormed by good,
We the Forlorn Hope over which Achievement strides?"

Thus far Mr. Hardy. But now compare Matthew Arnold, also "questioning" the supreme Powers:

Or is it that some force too stern, too strong,
Even for yourselves to conquer or beguile
Bears earth, and heaven, and men, and gods along,
Like the broad volume of the insurgent Nile!
And the great powers we serve, themselves may be
Slaves of a tyrannous necessity?

Or in mid-heaven, perhaps, your golden cars,
Where earthly voice climbs never, wing their flight,
And in wild hunt, through mazy tracts of stars,
Sweep in the sounding stillness of the night?
Or in deaf ease, on thrones of dazzling sheen,
Drinking deep draughts of joy, ye dwell serene?

The lines are from Mycerinus, one of the most beautiful of all the "questioning" poems of modern times. Pessimism is justified of its poet when it is done thus, or done as in the Book of Job. Beside it Mr. Hardy's verse is prose—vigorous and biting prose if anyone will, but still prose. In poetry we must have melodious tears, or none at all.

How shall we sum up this volume? It is all interesting, even at its worst. It lapses into bathos not seldom, it is deficient in form and technique, the writer has difficulties with rhyme. Yet now and again it breaks into something very like genius, something original, personal, intimate, finding expression in a manner that thrills and touches. Here is poetry, and no sensible reader will be less thankful for it because on another page there is prose or even bathos. A man of literary genius does not make a definite choice between prose or poetry, as though they were alternate branches of a bread-earning profession. If he is a poet, he writes poetry, and there is an end of it. The fact that Mr. Hardy has for thirty years chosen to write prose makes it idle to discuss whether it was his vocation to be a poet. But he has obviously inspiration enough for occasional poetic work, and we hope this will not be the last from his pen. Let us add that his own drawings, which accompany this volume, have a certain personal charm which attracts us greatly. Their effect, like that of Mr. Hardy's best poems, is curiously in advance of their technical merits.

* "Wessex Poems." By Thomas Hardy. (Harper.)

DAILY CHRONICLE. Dec 21. 1898.

MR. HARDY AS A POET.

"Wessex Poems, and Other Verses." By Thomas Hardy. (London: Harpers. 6s.)

Readers who care more for outward form in verse than for the utterance of a human spirit will find little to their taste in Mr. Hardy's "Wessex Poems." Those, on the other hand, who are interested to see a strong and sombre character expressing itself, in an imperfectly-mastered medium, no doubt, but with marked originality and high literary power, will be fascinated by the contents of this singular book. Towards the completion of Mr. Hardy's mental portraiture it gives invaluable aid; not less in those pieces which are "dramatic and personative" than in those which may be taken as direct utterances of a mood or thought. There is life and feeling on every page of the book; prick it, and it bleeds. It is also true that every page is open to technical criticism, whether of metre or of diction; but we somehow feel such criticism to be, in this case, an uncalled-for pedantry. If Mr. Hardy could be regarded as specifically a poet, and were like to form a school, one might feel bound to protest against his laxities of form. But he is too great a poet in prose to set undue store by these metrical experiments, many of which have lain unpublished for over thirty years. If you cannot get at their spirit through the flaws and nodosities of their outward form, you must go without a very keen and real literary enjoyment. And even in form, though Mr. Hardy seldom attains high polish, he is almost always original. There are staves and stanzas in this book which may one day put on a glorified life in the hands of a master of metre; but if so he ought to give the credit of their invention to Mr. Hardy. The verses, as a whole, are very aptly symbolised in the drawings which accompany them—"rough sketches," says Mr. Hardy, "which, as may be surmised, are inserted for personal and local reasons rather than for their intrinsic qualities." Some of them, indeed, are note-book jottings rather than works of art, but others show an accuracy of vision and a sincerity of touch that render them, not curious merely, but really beautiful. Mr. Hardy is specially successful in suggesting with his pencil (as with his pen) the contours of a wide English landscape. His view of Weymouth and the Isle of Portland from the Dorchester Road (p. 95) is really masterly; and no less admirable is the little vignette which precedes "My Cicely," showing the northern escarpment of "triple-ramparted Maidon," and the surrounding landscape. A third, which is on the same level of ability (even cleverer, perhaps, because more commonplace in subject), is the study of trees and rolling pasture-lands which faces the poem called "Her Immortality." More of a curiosity, but still very interesting, is the drawing of the amphitheatre at Dorchester, which illustrates the poem "Her Death and After." Several of the other landscapes are striking in their way, and the decorative designs (see, for instance, the hour-glass and the butterflies on p. 6, and the dead woman on p. 165) show dexterity of draughtsmanship as well as poetic conception. Still, it is evident throughout that Mr. Hardy has not acquired perfect freedom in the use of his pencil. The attraction of his work is that of extremely able and original effort, not of thorough accomplishment. And this is exactly the case with his verse as well. Its interest, its merit, is psychological rather than technical, though there are a few pieces (as there are a few drawings) whose technical quality also is very noteworthy.

Most of Mr. Hardy's longer poems are narratives of the kind with which he has made us familiar in "Life's Little Ironies" and other collections of short stories. Some of them, indeed, have already appeared in prose; and in the case of such a piece as "Her Death and After," or even "The Alarm," prose is, no doubt, the more fitting medium. On the other hand, the effect of "My Cicely" is greatly enhanced by its quaint, rugged stanza, with the insistent rhymes in "ee." A Devonshire man in London (the date is 17—) hears of the death of a "Cicely," who, as he imagines, used to be his sweetheart:—

The passion the planets had scowled on,
And change had let dwindle,
Her death-rumor smartly relifted
To full apogee.

I mounted a steed in the dawning
With acheful remembrance,
And made for the ancient West Highway
To far Exonb'ry.

Passing heaths, and the House of Long Sieging,
I neared the thin steeple
That tops the fair fane of Poore's olden
Episcopal see;

And, changing anew my endeavour,
I traversed the downland
Whereon the bleak hill-graves of chieftains
Bulge barren of tree;

And still sadly onward I followed
That Highway the Icen,
Which trails its pale riband down Wessex
O'er lynchet and lea.

Along through the Stour-bordered Forum,
Where legions had wayfared,
And where the slow river upglasses
Its green canopy.

Arriving at Exeter, the lover finds that the Cicely who is dead is not his Cicely, whom a worse fate has befallen; she is the drunken landlady of a roadside inn, where, in his journey westward, he has seen but not recognised her:—

I backed on the Highway; but passed not
The hostel. Within there
Too mocking to Love's re-expression
Was Time's repartee!

Uptracking where Legions had wayfared,
By cromlechs unstoried,
And lynchets, and sepultured chieftains,
In self-colloquy,

A feeling stirred in me and strengthened
That she was not my Love,
But she of the garth, who lay rapt in
Her long reverie.

And thence till to-day I persuade me
That this was the true one;
That Death stole intact her young dearness
And innocency.

Frail-witted, illuded they call me;
I may be. 'Tis better
To dream than to own the debasement
Of sweet Cicely.

Moreover I rate it unseemly
To hold that kind Heaven
Could work such device—to her ruin
And my misery.

Could anything be more characteristic of Mr. Hardy's tone of mind than his selection and treatment of this incident? Subjecting the crude mischances and brutalities of life to the alchymy of an ironic pessimism, he extracts from them a peculiar bitter-sweet melancholy which is among the most penetrant of latter-day literary savors. Here, in eight lines, is another of "Life's Little Ironies":—

SHE.
AT HIS FUNERAL.

They bear him to his resting-place—
In slow procession sweeping by;
I follow at a stranger's space;
His kindred they, his sweetheart I.
Unchanged my gown of garish dye,
Though sable-sad is their attire;
But they stand round with griefless eye,
Whilst my regret consumes like fire!

We find a continuation of the same theme, with the parts reversed as it were, in a very beautiful poem called "Her Immortality." The spirit of a dead woman, whom he has loved in vain, appears to her lover:—

"You draw me, and I come to you,
My faithful one," she said,
In voice that had the moving tone
It bore in maidenhead.

She said: "'Tis seven years since I died:
Few now remember me;
My husband clasps another bride;
My children mothers she.

"My brethren, sisters, and my friends
Care not to meet my sprite:
Who prised me most I did not know
Till I passed down from sight."

I said: "My days are lonely here;
I need thy smile alway:
I'll use this night my ball or blade,
And join thee ere the day."

A tremor stirred her tender lips,
Which parted to dissuade:
"That cannot be, O friend," she cried;
"Think, I am but a Shade!

"A Shade but in its mindful ones
Has immortality;
By living, me you keep alive,
By dying you slay me."

With all its simplicity, this is true and original work; and there is a great deal of at least equal merit in the book—for instance, "The Ivy-Wife," "At an Inn," "The Slow Nature," "The Burghers" (a singularly strong and Browningesque piece), "The Casterbridge Captains," and "A Sign-Seeker." If we were bound to select one number and call it the finest thing in the book, our choice would probably fall on "Heiress and Architect," a noble and beautiful poem; but fortunately no such choice is forced upon us! The most popular pieces in the volume will, no doubt, be the military ballads. Of these, "Leip-sic" is strong and fine, but we cannot regard "The Peasant's Confession" as equally successful. In the first place, it is dramatically incredible that the aide-de-camp sent from Napoleon to Grouchy should confide to a casual peasant the nature of the orders he was conveying. Even that other aide-de-camp of Napoleon, who figures in Mr. Shaw's "Man of Destiny," was scarcely more imbecile than this. In the second place, the diction of the poem is wantonly unreal. There are times when Mr. Hardy seems to lose all sense of local and historical perspective in language, seeing all the words in the dictionary on one plane, so to speak, and regarding them all as equally available and appropriate for any and every literary purpose. This peculiarity (familiar to readers of his novels) appears intermittently throughout his poems, but in none so obtrusively as in "The Peasant's Confession." On the other hand, no praise can be too high for the ballad of "Valenciennes." It is a gem in every respect—in spirit, in diction, in metre—and must be counted a substantial addition to the riches of English poetry. The speaker is a corporal, who has been struck stone-deaf by the explosion of a shell at the Siege of Valenciennes in 1793. We quote the last four verses, not as an adequate specimen of the whole poem, but to give some idea of its stirring and ingenious measure:—

I never hear the summer hums
O' bees; and don' know when the cuckoo comes;
But night and day I hear the bombs
We threw at Valenciën.

As for the Duke o' York in war,
There be some folk whose judgment o'en is mulm;
But this I say—'a was not far
From great at Valenciën.

O' wild wet nights, when all seems mad,
My wownds come back, as though new wownds I had;
But yet—at times I'm sort o' glad
I fout at Valenciën.

Well: Heaven wi' its jasper halls
Is now the on'y Town I care to be in. . . .
Good Lord, if Nick should bomb the walls
As we did Valenciën!

The longer we dwell upon these poems, the more strongly do we feel that the peculiarities of their diction and expression are immeasurably outweighed by their inherent interest, beauty, and individuality. The eccentricities are trivial (for instance, the fondness for putting a nominative pronoun after its verb, as in "My children mothers she," "Could ever have mingled we"), and on a second or third reading one scarcely notices them. The beauties, on the other hand, in a great majority of the poems, are deep and abiding; while every here and there Mr. Hardy attains something very like classical simplicity and strength. For instance:—

I look into my glass,
And view my wasting skin,
And say, "Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin!"

For then, I, undistrest
By hearts grown cold to me,
Could lonely wait my endless rest
With equanimity.

But Time, to make me grieve,
Part steals, lets part abide;
And shakes this fragile frame at eve
With throbbings of noontide.

This would not be out of place in an Elizabethan song-book.

THE TIMES, THURSDAY, JANUARY 5, 1899.

MR. HARDY'S WESSEX POEMS (Harpers).

The spirit in which Mr. Thomas Hardy views the world in these days is very aptly shown by one of the stiff little drawings of his own that are bound up with these "Wessex Poems." A man and woman are meeting in a church, and beneath the aisle we see the vaults, their grisly habitants, and an assortment of loose skulls and dusty remains of what was once humanity. So Mr. Hardy always sees beneath the rosy flesh the grinning skeleton, the emblem of mortality. The shadows of life cut off, of aims defeated, of withered loves, brood deeply over his work. Most of his novels have shown this, especially the later ones. This tragic intensity of outlook, expressed in Mr. Hardy's fine prose, has, it is true, a stimulating, soul-bracing effect, as of some rough wind which, while it buffets, still gives fresh vigour to face the storm. But if such a view of life is to be expressed in poetry it must be in poetry of the highest order—beauty of form must make up for sombre substance. Unfortunately Mr. Hardy is careless of form. Now and then he writes verse which has the true ring. "Revulsion," for example, sounds like an echo of an Elizabethan lyric :—

Though I waste watches framing words to fetter
Some spirit to mine own in clasp and kiss,
Out of the night there looms a sense 'twere better
To fail obtaining whom one fails to miss.

For winning love we win the risk of losing,
And losing love is as one's life were riven ;
It cuts like contumely and keen ill-using
To cede what was superfluously given.

Let me then feel no more the fateful thrilling
That devastates the love-worn wooer's frame,
The hot ado of fevered hopes, the chilling
That agonizes disappointed aim !
So may I live no junctive law fulfilling,
And my heart's table bear no woman's name.

Then we turn a page and get, as in "The Slow Nature," an echo of Wordsworth at his worst.

But a fortnight thence she could take no food,
And she pined in a slow decay ;
While Kit soon lost his mournful mood
And laughed in his ancient way.

Several of the poems are unrhymed and have very little rhythm, and it is quite evident that Mr. Hardy cares not a great deal for manner. He is a little given, too, to playing tricks with his verse. Take this stanza from "The Peasant's Confession," for instance, which is composed entirely of names :—

With Gordon, Canning, Blackman, Ompteda,
L'Estrange, Delancey, Packe,
Grose, D'Oyly, Stables, Morice, Howard, Hay,
Von Schwerin, Watzdorf, Bock.

The "Confession," as a whole, is one of the best, because it has a story to tell. "The Fire at Tranter Sweatley's" is capital (this has been published before), and the old deaf corporal's recollections of the siege of Valenciennes are stirring, and pathetic as well. But most of the poems are far from having either of these qualities. Discontent too deep for tears, railing at fortune that sends a shiver down the back, so grim and hopeless is it—these are Mr. Hardy's more frequent themes.

"And all his store of sad experience he
Lays bare, of wretched days."

This insistence upon the melancholy side of things we find depressing. There are fine thoughts constantly offered to us, but we feel too mournful to appreciate them. Those who like to "sit upon the ground and tell sad stories" of the hollowness of life will find Mr. Hardy's mood congenial. The more numerous readers of poetry who think that the poet should keep his hair-shirt out of sight will close "Wessex Poems" with a sigh and wish Mr. Hardy could have brought himself to be a little more cheerful.

Glasgow Herald, Jan 4. 1899

POETRY, VERSE, AND DRAMA.

Wessex Poems, and Other Verses. By Thomas Hardy. With Thirty Illustrations by the Author. (London and New York: Harper & Brothers.)—These poems will find little favour with the young. Not that they lack ability or even genius—for they are of Mr Hardy's making—but that, for the most part, they lower the damper upon the fires of hope. They are the work of a moral anatomist working often in a dim medium, and some of them produce the feeling that they should be read in the vicinity of a graveyard, tenanted only by the dust of irredeemable romance. It is not, of course, Mr Hardy's fault that he is no dreamer, or that he does not write in rosewater. There is a kind of 'cussedness in Nature of which he seems to be the victim. He judges of men and events as he finds them, though he does not hesitate to make darker the cloud in which they are compelled to move, apparently by uncharitable force or undivine mishap. In one piece he says :—

"How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unbloom the best hope ever sown?
Crass casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan—
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain."

In another poem he figures, "A Sign-seeker," one who has called upon the goodly dead whom he has known, to shape a sign from the other world. But there is no response, no help to open out his limited ideas, and the result is that "Nescience mutely muses, 'When a man falls he lies.'" This is quite in Mr Hardy's manner, as readers of his novels well know. There are other similar touches in these poems which in many respects recall the style and colour of the prose tales. But, Mr Hardy's pessimism apart, it must be admitted that this volume contains a mass of singularly impressive verse which will be carefully scanned, especially by readers who have reached some maturity of years and independence of thought. The ballads, though not wholly free from the speculative element, will be most liked. In "San Sebastian," for instance, we find a man who, at the taking of that fort, abuses a girl, and who, in returning home, marries, and is blessed, yet in a sense cursed, with a daughter who is the exact reproduction of the girl he had wronged. He loves his own child, but by her image she renders him a haunted man—

"So, to-day I stand with a God-set brand
Like Cain's when he wandered from kindred's ken.
I served through the war that made Europe free;
I wived me in peace year, but hid from men,
I bear a mark on me."

It is only a poet like Mr Hardy who could have thought of touching such a curious point in moral physiology.

Other poems, like "Cicely" and "Her Death and After," are notable examples of the Hardy muse, especially the latter. Mr Hardy's illustrations are very striking, and help to give force to the poetry. They are in fact themselves poems, and, like the poems, are thoughts that compel thinking.

The Globe, Dec 31. 1898

One volume of verse of strong individual quality has, however, appeared in Mr. Hardy's "Wessex Poems." They will not add to his reputation as a man of letters, but they supply a most interesting personal background to his works. In the Wessex novels Mr. Hardy stands apart, interfering in no way with the dramas he presents with such merciless directness. Here we see himself. The book is a gloomy one, a mixture of pessimistic sonnet and lyric, and sombre ballad. Mr. Hardy now and again achieves a terrible tragic force. He is no poet in the full sense, but a master artificer of phrases; and he cannot be other than penetrative and impressive. The poems may smell over-much of mortality, but they make a real book, the product of a mind.

The Speaker, Dec. 24th 1898.

MR. HARDY'S "WESSEX POEMS."

I LEARN from that invaluable compilation "Who's Who" that Mr. Thomas Hardy was born in 1840. And I observe in his volume of "Wessex Poems" (Harper Brothers), now collected and—with few exceptions—printed for the first time, that a number of his most remarkable experiments in verse are dated 1866. And turning again to "Who's Who" I find that he relinquished architecture, his early calling, for literature during the years 1868–72, publishing his first novel, "Desperate Remedies," in 1871.

These dates seem to confirm a suspicion which is bound (I think) to occur to every careful reader of the poems written between 1865 and 1868: a suspicion that during this period Mr. Hardy was not only feeling his way to the discovery that in literature lay the true field for his genius and its expression, but halted for some time in doubt between the rival forms of prose and verse. I have called these poems remarkable experiments; and will defend the adjective by-and-by. That they are experiments no critic can doubt; for their tentativeness is written all over them.

A few may be called imitative. The sonnets "She, to Him," for instance, were clearly written under the spell of Shakespeare's Sonnets—that spell which, curiously revived, has lain so potently on the last two generations. The opening lines proclaim their derivation aloud—

When you shall see me lined by tool of Time,
My lauded beauties carried off from me . . .

Yet even these contain images of high originality: this, for instance—

Remembering that with me lies not the blame,
That sportsman Time but rears his brood to kill . . .

or this, of woman's constancy—

I have no care for friends, or kin, or prime
Of manhood who deal gently with me here;
Amid the happy people of my time
Who work their love's fulfilment, I appear
Numb as a vane that cankers on its point,
True to the wind that kissed ere canker came. . . .

The whole of this sonnet, by the way, is singularly beautiful in thought and (what is rarer with these early efforts) melodious in speech.

But imitativeness is by no means the note of Mr. Hardy's early poems. I should guess that he found the Muse difficult to woo, and that from the first his thought tripped up his diction. Some of his lines are clumsy with that almost inconceivable clumsiness only given to those who have genuine thoughts to express.

A stolid line, whom no high aims will fire
As had fired ours could ever have mingled we—

for instance, is simply atrocious. And almost every one of his ballad metres suffers from a curious limp—which, however, has an attractiveness, an attractiveness never attained by the "butterwoman's rank" of the facile and fluent versifiers. His Muse stutters at times over strange locations. The volume, in short, should leave nobody in doubt that in choosing prose for his medium Mr. Hardy chose most wisely.

And yet it is a remarkable book—one of the most remarkable contributions made to our poetry for many days. Its originality never stands in doubt, and is, to my thinking, immensely helped by the drawings with which Mr. Hardy has furnished it. I am quite prepared to hear critics, who judge them merely as drawings, proclaim them stiff and childish; but I am equally prepared to contend that as illustrations no drawings could have been more successful. The awkward figures, the wide, conventional landscapes mapped out into grass and woodland and arable, the stiff designs which remind one that Mr. Hardy was an architect before he became a writer—these, if they have not (and I believe they have) intrinsic beauty, are at any rate packed with meaning, and reveal something which the poems they decorate are also trying to reveal. The test for me is that I remember them whilst remembering the poems, and cannot remember the poems without them. I have seen many drawings intended to illustrate Waterloo, but henceforth Waterloo is for me the sullen, rainy plain of the plate which illustrates Mr. Hardy's ballad, "The Peasant's Confession." Nothing could have explained to me more thoroughly "Her Death and After" than the stiff graveyard, with its cypresses and tombs and the outline of the great

Round at Casterbridge topping its straight wall—

That haggard mark of Imperial Rome.

And that most haunting ballad, "My Cicely," haunts me with its two drawings of the straight Roman Road and the towers of Exeter Cathedral.

Of the narrative poems these two, "Her Death and After" and "My Cicely," seem to me the strongest and most poignant. A man is summoned to the death-bed of a woman whom he had loved and who had loved him but married another. They are alone, and the woman confesses that her husband is unkind, and she fears he may ill-treat the girl-child she leaves—

— Truth shall I tell?
Would the child were yours and mine!

As a wife I was true. But such my unease
That could I insert a deed back in Time,
I'd make her yours, to secure your care;
And the scandal bear,
And the penalty for the crime!

She dies and it falls out as she feared. The husband marries again, begets children, and ill-treats the lame child of his first wife. On nightfall he finds the lover near the cemetery and charges him with visiting the dead woman's grave—

"There's decency even in death, I assume;
Preserve it, sir, and keep away;
For the mother of my first-born you
Show mind undue!
— Sir, I've nothing more to say."

A desperate stroke discerned I then—
God pardon—or pardon not—the lie;
She had sighed that she wished (lest the child should pine
Of slights) 'twere mine,
So I said: "But the father I."

And on the strength of that lie he is given the child to adopt and maintain.

And I gave the child my love,
And the child loved me, and estranged us none.
But compunctions loomed; for I'd harmed the dead
By what I'd said
For the good of the living one.

—Yet though, God wot, I am sinner enough,
And unworthy the woman who drew me so,
Perhaps this wrong for her darling's good
She forgives, or would
If only she could know!

In "My Cicely" a man hears the rumour that the woman he once loved is dead at Exeter; and mounts his horse and rides through Wessex and along the West Highway to that city. And there, in the graveyard, he learns that the Cicely just buried was not *his* Cicely. *His* Cicely is alive and married, and (having married beneath her) keeps the Three Lions inn on the road along which he had just ridden.

I shuddered, said nothing, and wandered
To shades of green laurel:
Too ghastly had grown those first tidings
So brightsome of blee!

For on my ride hither, I'd halted
Awhile at the Lions,
And her—her whose name had once opened
My heart as a key—

I'd looked on, unknowing, and witnessed
Her jests with the tapsters,
Her liquor-fired face, her thick accents
In naming her fee.

He rides back, but not by way of the hostel. And as he rides—

A feeling stirred in me and strengthened
That she was not my love,
But she of the garth, who lay rapt in
Her long reverie.

From that day his Cicely is not the lowered woman of the inn, but the unknown, unsoiled one who rests in the church-hay at Exeter. It is a subtle, spiritually truthful tale, told in a curiously arresting metre: and on the whole, perhaps, the most haunting ballad in a book full of haunting things.

It scarcely needs to be said that the whole book is tinged by Mr. Hardy's peculiar pessimism. To him here, as in "Tess," "Crass Casualty" is the Lord of the Universe. It is, as my readers know, a philosophy of life to which I will not subscribe: and so I content myself with saying that in this book, as in Mr. Hardy's novels, it finds a thoroughly sincere and undoubtedly forcible expression. Some men's minds find law in the world, others are obliged to dwell on the casualties and scraps and wastage at the exp nse of which the divine order moves. We may lament that in our time the side of chance and casualty has enlisted so impressive a writer as Mr. Hardy. And we may deny that, in the end, his creed will weigh (let me say) against Mr. Meredith's, who undoubtedly preaches no silly optimism, but who undoubtedly does find stern reason in the centre of this world's workings. Yet it would be ill for our generation if the gloomier case were to go without its advocate; and no one who values poetry can fail to yield admiration, if not assent, to the author of "Heiress and Architect," "Friends Beyond," "Her Death and After," "Her Dilemma," and "My Cicely." Sometimes I think that, even when after-dinner speakers have finished cursing the literature of their day, it will be remembered because it was brave.

A. T. Q. C.

THE OUTLOOK.
Dec 24. 1898

LITERARY GOSSIP

MR. HARDY'S poems have a decided personal interest. Though avowedly dramatic in a large degree, they plainly illustrate Mr. Hardy's personal outlook upon life in a measure to which his novels can lay no claim. They hint a good deal of their author's spiritual biography, and have therefore a significance apart from their particular, though not outstanding, merits as poetry. Life's irony has made them. Never gross, they have yet a touch of the Wessex earthiness as well as a hint of its mystery. They are in places the questionings and communings of an isolated and melancholy spirit, which, sometimes escaping the earth, scarcely ever reaches the stars. They are interesting revelations of feeling, never of intellectuality; a singular contrast to those of Mr. Hardy's illustrious contemporary, Mr. Meredith. Mr. Meredith glows, walks ardently through the beloved ways of nature, contemplates dazzling heights and developments of intelligence; Mr. Hardy stands still and broods. A few of the ballads are direct, dramatic, entirely successful in their way. There are a few derivative pieces—inspired by Elizabethan and also eighteenth-century sources.

LITERATURE
Dec 31st 1898.

Wessex Poems, and other Verses. By **Thomas Hardy.** With 30 Illustrations by the Author. 8¼×6in., viii.+228 pp. London and New York, 1898. **Harper. 6/-**

Curiosity to know how the master of one art will acquit himself in another is a somewhat mysterious instinct of mankind; but there is at least no doubt either of the width of its diffusion or of the depth of its implantation in the human breast. It may be trusted to secure Mr. Hardy an interested and attentive audience for his "Wessex Poems." They are of very various ages, the earliest of them dating from as far back as 1866—before their author had scored his first successes as a novelist—and the latest from only a few years ago. Many of them, without being exactly dialect poems, approximate to that character, and that, too, in a somewhat unsatisfactory manner. The principle on which, as stated by him in his preface, Mr. Hardy has proceeded is that "whenever an ancient and legitimate word of the district for which there was no equivalent in received English suggested itself as the most natural, nearest, and often only expression of a thought, it has been made use of on what seemed good grounds." We fear that the grounds are not quite so good as Mr. Hardy thinks them. The use of such words is of course dramatically correct when the poem itself is dramatic; but when the author is speaking in his own person, and of course therefore speaking English "of the centre," the intrusion of local *patois* has naturally a somewhat grotesque and unpleasing effect. Nor in any case could Mr. Hardy's principle apply to those too numerous inversions of phrase and other eccentricities of diction which give unnecessary harshness to a poetic note at no moment remarkable for its melody.

However, it is of course not on their musical quality that the author of "Wessex Poems" invites judgment upon them. Rather, no doubt, he would claim for them the

THE TIMES,

JANUARY 5

MR. HARDY'S WESSEX

The spirit in which Mr
the world in these days
one of the stiff little de
are bound up with these "
man and woman are mea
beneath the aisle we see th
habitants, and an assortme
dusty remains of what was
Mr. Hardy always sees be
grinning skeleton, the emb
shadows of life cut off,
withered loves, brood de
Most of his novels have
the later ones. This tragi
expressed in Mr. Hardy'
true, a stimulating, s
of some rough wind wh
still gives fresh vigour
But if such a view
pressed in poetry it mu
highest order—beauty of
sombre substance. Unfo
is careless of form. No
verse which has the true
for example, sounds like
bethan lyric :—

Though I waste watches fra
Some spir.t to mine own
Out of the night there loo
To fail obtaining whom o

For winning love we win th
And losing love is as one'
It cuts like contumely and
To cede what was superfl

Let me then feel no more t
That devastates the love-
The hot ado of fevered bo
That agonizes disappointe
So may I live no jonctive is
And my heart's table bear

Then we turn a page and
Nature," an echo of Word

But a fortnight there she
And she pined in a slo
While Kit soon lost his m
And laughed in his an

Several of the poems are
little rhythm, and it is
Hardy cares not a great d
a little given, too, to p
verse. Take this stanza
Confession," for instanc
entirely of names :—

With Gordon, Canning, Bla
L'Estrange, Delancey,
Grose, D'Oyly, Stables, M
Von Schwerin, Watzdo

The "Confession," as
the best, because it has
Fire at Tranter Sweatle
has been published b
deaf corporal's recollec
Valenciennes are stirring
But most of the poems ar
of these qualities. Discor
railing at fortune that s
back, so grim and ho
Mr. Hardy's more freque

"And all his store of
Lays bare, of wre

This insistence upon the
we find depressing. Ther
stantly offered to us, but
to appreciate them. Th
upon the ground and
the hollowness of life will
congenial. The more nu
who think that the poe
shirt out of sight will
with a sigh and wish
brought himself to be a

The St. James's Gazette, Dec 28. 1898.

MR HARDY'S FREAKS.*

If Mr. Hardy had never written a line of prose fiction, this volume of verse would have made its mark. Being the work of a distinguished novelist, it is inevitably of the greatest literary interest. And, being also by no means free from flaw or blemish, it is even more interesting still. There is nothing of the faultily faultless or splendidly null about this book; and beside the actual value as poetry in much of its contents, it has also the additional attraction of giving us, in a peculiarly deliberate form, the indiscretions and mistakes of a considerable artist in imaginative literature. Four only of the fifty-odd pieces have been published before, but the dates appended to the poems show that they are all the production of Mr. Hardy's most vigorous period. In fact, they are exceedingly characteristic of Mr. Hardy's merits and demerits in their full vigour, with the complication that verse is not really his natural form. The best are, to our mind, "Valenciennes," "The Sergeant's Song," "The Burghers," "Leipzig," "Her Death and After" (a typical Hardy story in verse, which seems to us to pine for Mr. Hardy's prose), "The Dance at the Phœnix," and "The Fire at Tranter Sweatley's." The only thing in the volume which really seems to us to show any proper lyrical genius is the "Stranger's Song." Mr. Hardy, in fine, is not a poet, but he has an odd twist in his literary composition which even in his prose gives it a poetical touch, and which when he is using a metrical form cannot desert him, and is occasionally, but by no means continuously, assisted by it. Neither is Mr. Hardy an illustrator, in spite of his illustrations. His drawings are partly those of an architect, such as he was brought up to be, and partly those of a literary man with a pencil, who can draw enough to please himself. The consequence is that these efforts are all personal impressions, sidelights on the man and the author, and very remarkable as such. Whatever they are not, they are original, and significant. No admirer of Mr. Hardy's novels can, therefore, ignore so autobiographical a commentary.

* Wessex Poems: and Other Verses. By Thomas Hardy. (Harpers.)

character of poetry on the strength of a certain grim intensity of feeling of the same kind as, but carried to a higher power than, that which animates his remarkable novels. Life's "little ironies" strike the keynote of many a poem in this volume, and that cloud of dreary pessimism which has gathered more and more thickly of late years over Mr. Hardy's prose writings is here hardly anywhere lifted. A few welcome exceptions are to be found in the spirited soldier-songs reprinted from "The Trumpet Major"; and Corp'l Tullidge's "Valenciennes" is a really worthy addition to the warlike lyrics of the language. The old Wessex soldier tells how at the bombardment of "Valencieën" a "shell was shent to shards anighst my ears," and how

They bore my wownded frame to camp
And shut my gapen skull and washed en clean,
And joined en wi' a silver clamp
That night at Valencieën.

"We've fetched en back to quick from dead,
But never more on earth while rose is red
Will drum rouse Corpel," doctor said,
"O'me at Valencieën."

'Twere true. No voice of friend or foe
Can reach me now, or any liven been,
And little have I power to know
Since then at Valencieën.

I never hear the zummer hums
O' bees; and don't know when the cuckoo comes;
But night and day I hear the bombs
We threw at Valencieën.

. . . . .

O' wild wet nights when all seems sad
My wownds come back as though new wownds I'd had;
But yet—at times I'm sort o' glad
I fout at Valencieën.

Well: Heaven wi' its jasper halls
Is now the on'y Town I care to be in. . . .
Good Lord, if Nick should bomb the walls
As we did Valencieën.

"Leipzig" and "The Peasant's Confession" are less successful attempts. Mr. Hardy's soldiers and rustics and other spinners of battle-yarns have to be Wessex-bred in order to be quite natural.

Of the other narrative poems, "The Dance at the Phœnix"—the tale of an old country woman who quits her sleeping husband's side to steal out and dance at the village inn with the returned troopers among whom she had played light-of-love in her disreputable youth—is perhaps the most striking, full as it is of Mr. Hardy's bitter humour and his relentless handling of the irony of human fortunes. It is just the touch of sardonic comedy, however, which gives the poem its distinction and justifies its form. Elsewhere in the volume, when this element is lacking, and we get a mere dreary and painful picture, such as the following, the effect is far less satisfying:—

The two were silent in a sunless Church,
Where mildewed walls, uneven paving-stones,
And wasted carvings passed antique research,
And nothing broke the clock's dull monotones.

Leaning against a wormy poppy-head,
So wan and worn that he could hardly stand;
For he was soon to die—he softly said,
"Tell me you love me"—holding hard her hand.

She would have given a world to breathe "Yes" truly,
So much his life seemed hanging on her mind;
And hence she lied, her heart persuaded throughly
'Twas worth her soul to be a moment kind.

But the sad need thereof, his nearing death,
So mocked humanity that she shamed to prize
A world conditioned thus, or care for breath
When Nature such dilemmas could devise.

The piteous little scene might have come straight out of one of Mr. Hardy's later novels. It might be some weak, unhappy, prematurely-dying Jude who pleads thus, to be thus answered. And the woman, fresh from her pious fraud, might have revolted, as here, against the scheme of things. But what could be more flat and ineffective than the four concluding lines in which her reflections are embodied! What more laboriously sought and less "inevitable" than their phrasing! There is better than this in the volume, but there is also worse; it is no unfair sample of the whole; and the whole, we fear, is conclusive as to the unfitness of this medium of expression for Mr. Hardy's genius. The illustrative sketches which are all of them interesting, and not a few of them singularly powerful little studies of the wide and rolling pastures that he loves, express that genius far more adequately. In the letter-press, it is true, we get all its characteristic products—its penetrating insight into life, its feeling for rustic humour, its poignant mockery, its deep and desolating sadness. But after each fresh attempt at its utterance, however strenuous and studied, the same question—fatal always to poetry in its merest suggestion—arises in the mind of the reader: "Why not prose?"

Christian World
Feb 23. 1899

POETRY.

Wessex Poems; and Other Verses. By Thomas Hardy. (Harper Bros. 6s. and 7s. 6d.)

It is a perilous business for a man who has achieved eminence in one direction to solicit the world in a new *rôle*, and we are doubtful whether Mr. Hardy's venture into verse will add fresh laurels to his fame. Not that there is any lack here either of force or originality. There is nowhere in the book the suggestion of weakness, but everywhere Mr. Hardy's own stamp of virility. Such pieces as 'The Temporary the All' and 'Unknowing' are examples, of which there are many others here, of a perfect poetic conception enshrined in a perfect poetic form; while in 'The Peasant's Confession,' 'The Dance at the Phœnix,' 'Leipzig,' and other similar pieces, we see how admirably Mr. Hardy can tell a story in verse. But the general impression one carries from the book, so far as form is concerned, is of a certain hardness of line, as of trees in winter, which leaves one longing for the summer foliage. One's quarrel with the book is, however, not simply on a point of form. We could dispense with the cunning word-artistry of a Swinburne and a Watson were the substance more helpful. For the poet, we hold, should be always a helper to the inner life—to its courage, its devotion, its hope—and this Mr. Hardy is not. He is the prophet always of despair. His one note throughout the volume is the inevitable canker-worm at the root of life. On the ground the lights are only will o' the wisps, above all is blackness. If a man have nothing other than this for us he were better silent. The poem, 'The Impercipient' (At a Cathedral Service), is really a confession of the inward failure out of which all this comes:

That from this bright believing band
An outcast I should be,
That faiths by which my comrades stand
Seem fantasies to me,
And mirage mists their Shining Land,
Is a drear destiny.

There is the whole secret. Hardy, amid all his gifts, lacks that sense of inward peace and victory which is surely the first essential to a teacher. The humblest outlook of content is to us infinitely more inspiring, more filled with the essential poetry of life, than all this vast horizon of unmitigated gloom.

Reviews.

Mr. Hardy as a Poet.

Wessex Poems. By Thomas Hardy. (Harpers. 6s.)

It has become almost the fashion for prose-writers of all kinds to make at least one attempt in verse; and indeed for celebrities generally to essay some art outside that which earned them their fame. A painter or sculptor will make his bow to the public in verse—like Mr. Storey or Mr. Woolner; a distinguished draughtsman, at the close of his career, becomes a popular novelist. A parliamentary leader writes philosophy, a queen turns poetess, a Kaiser becomes everything by turns, and nothing long. Leaders of society take to the stage, leaders of the stage to society. Housemaids turn lady-novelists, lady-journalists turn amateur housemaids. Everybody seems infected with the child's spirit of make-believe: "Let us play we are actors, or novelists, or singers," they say, and they play it. The number of prose-writers who have made their appearance as poets is legion. Mr. George Meredith we do not count, for he has always combined the two characters; but Mr. R. D. Blackmore, Mr. Quiller-Couch, Mr. Conan Doyle, are modern instances one at once remembers, while in the elder generation were Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot. Perhaps the father of novelist-versifiers was Smollett. It is a dubious experiment for a proseman to sit in the Siege Perilous of poetry, as the examples of Mr. Ruskin and Mr. Lecky remind us. To adapt Tacitus, all would have agreed Mr. Ruskin was capable of writing poetry, if he had not written it. With novelists the odds are still greater. As a rule their whole training and nature is not only un-lyrical but anti-lyrical. Their desire is to tell a story or paint a character, and to do so with detailed elaboration, with the aid of constant side-lights, rejecting nothing as common or mean which will serve that central purpose. It is a method anti-poetic even in the case of the ballad. Drama would give them more native scope. But in poetic drama the central figures must be kept on the heroic plane, and accordingly few novelists have essayed poetic drama. When even George Eliot made no unquestioned success as a poet, it needs some courage for a great novelist to come forward in later life with a volume of verse in his hand.

This is what Mr. Thomas Hardy has done. Save for what might be styled a "character-song" in one novel, and another slight song in a recent play, he has been sternly faithful to his one remarkable talent. All his life he has been drawing the English peasant, most unpoetical of peasants, with realism faithful to his stolidity, coarseness, and absence of any romance save that of destiny, which is present in all things ruled by Fate. One would expect that Mr. Hardy could scarcely have had time to master the mere *technique* of verse; that his strong, grim hand would be too heavy for poetry; that with all the forceful picturesqueness of his clean English, it was a tongue "that in chiming numbers would not run," too unalloyedly vernacular and sturdy of limb for the supplejointed Muse. One might also surmise that, like Mr. Conan Doyle, he would rely for most of his success on the ballad. And all these things are so. But what could not have been expected is that, though ballads form the bulk of the book, it is not in these he shows at his best.

MR. HARDY'S ILLUSTRATION FOR "SHE TO HIM."

No, and the fact is surprising—is contrary to all which could be argued from his vocation as novelist. Here, where he has opportunity for dramatic and characteristic writing, is not his happiest work; but, on the contrary, it must be looked for among the lyrical and personal poems of the opening section. There we find tokens that the stuff of the poet is not lacking in Mr. Hardy, had he chosen to bestow on verse the same concentration which has made him a novelist, had he developed technique by unremitting practice. Dryden achieved his mastery of versification by constant writing, and that Shakespeare did the same there is evidence enough in his plays. Few can write even a fluent song by mere gift of nature, unless they have nothing to say in it—when it seems to come easily enough to over-many versifiers. But Mr. Hardy has something to say. And in some lyrics sheer closeness of thought and feeling seems to make violent seizure of Poetry. Such a compelling hand is laid on her in the following verses:

SHE TO HIM.

I will be faithful to thee; aye, I will,
And death shall choose me with a wondering eye
That he did not discern and domicile
One his by right ever since that last good-bye!

I have no care for friends, or kin, or prime
Of manhood who deal gently with me here;
Amid the happy people of my time,
Who work their love's fulfilment, I appear

though Mr. George Meredith were to invite his friends to inspect a small collection of his bronze medallions, or Mr. Swinburne to take the place of Mr. Paderewski at the piano. But it was immediately found that the "Wessex Poems" were independently good of their kind, and characteristic of Mr. Hardy's individuality to a remarkable degree. They were very moving, entertaining, satisfactory compositions as poetry. Only there was something wrong must not be sensation at the expense of reflection. Perhaps we begin to see why the "Wessex Poems," with characteristics which raise them above a hundred volumes of excellent verse, are not entirely satisfactory. They are lop-sided; they bulge or collapse where they should present a globular perfection. It is interesting that Mr. Hardy should have waited until now before he published them, since he could have found at no moment in forty years a more apt occasion

Numb as a vane that cankers on its point
True to the wind that kissed ere canker came;
Despised by souls of Now, who would disjoint
The mind from memory, and make Life all aim,
My old dexterities of hue quite gone,
And nothing left for Love to look upon.

The image of the cankered vane is imaginative and subtle. Again, in the poem called "Neutral Tones," the truth of feeling carries the reader over the lack of metrical finish.

We stood by a pond that winter day
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod,
They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

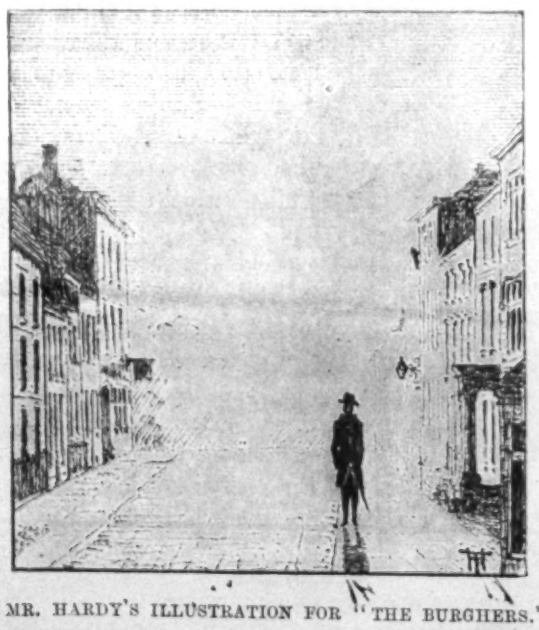
Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
Over tedious riddles solved years ago;
And some words played between us to and fro—
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing
Alive enough to have strength to die;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing.

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.

This is concentrated and bitten in with a sparing effectiveness, reminding one of like vignettes in the novels.

But when we come to the ballads, it is different. Based on Wessex stories and memories, we can imagine how effective they would be in Mr. Hardy's prose. The misfortune is that we are reminded of this. We feel the novelist's method, the novelist's hand, and wish the



MR. HARDY'S ILLUSTRATION FOR "THE BURGHERS."

narrative disembarrassed of its metre. Here, too, the technical inexpertness which we have already implied is chiefly in evidence; and the effect is intensified, somehow, by the dialect—which it always needs a crafty hand to make palatable in poetry. The itinerary in "My Cicely" is an extreme example of the novelist's manner misleading the poet:

Passing heaths, and the House of Long Sieging,
I neared the thin steeple
That tops the fair fane of Poore's olden
Episcopal see.

And so on. In prose Mr. Hardy could have made it interesting; in poetry it fatally suggests a versified guide-book. Let us hark back to the lyrics, where a charming poem awaits us for *bonne bouche*:

Beneath a knap where flown
Nestlings play,
Within walls of weathered stone,
Far away
From the files of formal houses,
By the bough the firstling browses,
Lives a Sweet; no merchants meet,
No man barters, no man sells,
Where she dwells.

Upon that fabric fair
"Here is she!"
Seems written everywhere
Unto me.
But to friend and nodding neighbours,
Fellow-wights in lot and labours,
Who descry the times as I,
No such lucid legend tells
Where she dwells.

Should I lapse to what I was
In days ~~gone~~ by;
(Such can not be, but because
Some loves die
Let me feign it)—none would notice
That where she I know by rote is
Spread a strange and withering change,
Like a drying of the wells
Where she dwells.

To feel I might have kissed—
Loved as true—
Otherwhere, nor Mine have missed
My life through,
Had I never wandered near her,
Is a thought severe—severer
In the thought that she is nought,
Even as I, beyond the dells
Where she dwells.

And Devotion droops her glance
To recall
What bond-servants of Chance
We are all.
I but found her, in that—going
On my errant path unknowing—
I did not out-skirt the spot
That no spot on earth excels,—
Where she dwells!

That daintily perfect lyric is enough in itself to show the poet in Mr. Hardy, and to justify a book which must, besides, be interesting to all whom his art has captivated—and they are legion. With its sweetness fresh in our mouth, we can close the volume, and thank the writer.

Athenæum,
Jan 14 1899

LITERATURE

Wessex Poems, and other Verses. By Thomas Hardy. (Harper & Brothers.)

It is not often that a writer at an advanced, if not quite the eleventh, hour essays two new arts at a blow. Nevertheless, this is the case with Mr. Hardy, who has not only published a volume of poetry, but has also adorned it with thirty drawings and designs from his own pencil. These illustrations

I mounted a steed in the dawning
With acheful remembrance,
And made for the ancient West Highway
To far Exonb'ry.

Passing heaths, and the House of Long Sieging,
I neared the thin steeple
That tops the fair fane of Poore's olden
Episcopal see;

And, changing anew my onbearer,
I traversed the downland
Whereon the bleak hill-graves of Chieftains
Bulge barren of tree;

And still sadly onward I followed
That Highway the Icen,
Which trails its pale riband down Wessex
O'er lynchet and lea.

We do not conceal our opinion that Mr. Hardy's success in poetry is of a very narrow range. He is entirely dependent for his inspiration upon this curiously intense and somewhat dismal vision of life, which is upon him almost as an obsession. Where he is not carried along by this, his movement is faltering, and his touch prosaic.

But within such close limits his achievement seems to us to be considerable, and to be of a kind with which modern poetry can ill afford to dispense. There is no finish or artifice about it: the note struck is strenuous, austere, forcible; it is writing

Literature

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FORM IN POETRY.

The most interesting event in pure literature this winter has unquestionably been the publication of Mr. Hardy's "Wessex Poems." We have already noticed this volume in the usual course, but it presents certain features which suggest to us considerations of a particular kind. These poems were an entirely unexpected apparition. Their author is one of the five or six living writers of prose who may be said to have entered into their rest, to have risen into an eminence unassailable by the fluctuations of fashion. The poems were received, at the first moment, with the curiosity due to the freak of a man of genius, as though Mr. George Meredith were to invite his friends to inspect a small collection of his bronze medallions, or Mr. Swinburne to take the place of Mr. Paderewski at the piano. But it was immediately found that the "Wessex Poems" were independently good of their kind, and characteristic of Mr. Hardy's individuality to a remarkable degree. They were very moving, entertaining, satisfactory compositions as poetry. Only there was something wrong with them, or unusual about them—a puzzling quality. What was this? The reviewers, in a chorus, have decided that it was "want of form."

This does not seem very luminous; and we turn again to "Beneath a knap where flown" and to "Friends Beyond" to see how far this formula helps us to understand what is wanting in these very delightful pieces. Perhaps it does help us as much as any other formula, although it needs to be defined. Here is no example of that positive inability to write well in verse which has marked several great prose writers, such as in Carlyle and Hume; nor of that still more curious ability to write once or twice well, and never to regain the careless rapture, as in Berkeley and Chateaubriand. The phenomenon is other. In Mr. Hardy we have a copious poet, with a strongly-marked and appropriate accent of his own, composing (so to speak) professionally in verse, able to amuse and move us along lines strictly parallel with his prose, and yet lacking something. This is not a case like George Eliot's, where the essence of the writer's style evaporates in the restraint of verse. Never was Mr. Hardy more intensely and exclusively himself than in "My Cicely." Yet is this a complete success? Much as we admire it, we cannot say that it is.

And by Weatherbury Castle, and therence
Through Casterbridge bore I
To tomb her whose light, in my deeming,
Extinguished had He,

is not quite satisfactory. Why? Simply and solely because the form is grotesque. Here is the colour of poetry but not its sound, its essence but not its shape.

A French critic, whose dictum it is impossible to accept, has said that a perfect poem must appeal to all the five senses at once, that it must be "sapide—odorante—sonore—visible—tangible." It is difficult to believe that this gentleman is a sincere seeker after truth. But it is quite true that there is something synthetic about completed verse, that it must reflect several facets of the ideal Beauty. Perhaps it is a little less fantastic to say that it must present us with a mosaic of beautiful qualities, and that these in their combination are what we call "form." There must be an appeal to the eye and to the ear, an idealization of reality in music, a realization of the ideal in plasticity. And all these qualities, with those of the intellect and the character intermingled with them, must be harmonized and balanced. There must not be serried, emphatic speech at the expense of melody; there must not be sensation at the expense of reflection. Perhaps we begin to see why the "Wessex Poems," with characteristics which raise them above a hundred volumes of excellent verse, are not entirely satisfactory. They are lop-sided; they bulge or collapse where they should present a globular perfection. It is interesting that Mr. Hardy should have waited until now before he published them, since he could have found at no moment in forty years a more apt occasion

Numb as a vane that cankers on its point
True to the wind that kissed ere canker came;
Despised by souls of Now, who would disjoint
The mind from memory, and make Life all aim,
My old dexterities of hue quite gone,
And nothing left for Love to look upon.

is an extreme example of the novelist's manner misleading the poet:

Passing heaths, and the House of Long Sieging,
I neared the thin steeple
That tops the fair fane of Poore's olden
Episcopal see.

than this for their appearance. And it is this to which we desire, without praise or blame, to draw the attention of our readers. This is a moment when form is less considered in English poetry than it has been, perhaps, since the opening of the Early Victorian period. At the close of each impassioned poetical movement there comes a time when form is no longer valued, when it is even scorned and reviled. After the Elizabethans came the degradation of verse which made the "short, sharp shock" of the classical couplet absolutely necessary. After the great romantic age of Byron and Wordsworth came the love for shapeless lyrical dramas of the "Festus" class. Perfection of form, when it is no longer informed by passion, is a source of weariness, and writers try to secure sensation by steadily neglecting executive adroitness.

When Poe, no mediocre judge, first read the Tennyson of 1833, he said that the writer of these lyrics was not only a great poet, but the greatest who had ever lived. Wiseacres have shaken their heads for generations over this violent dictum, which (of course) was not meant to be taken literally. But what Poe, himself a writer exquisitely sensitive to form, meant was that Tennyson's poems showed a combination of the qualities which go to make up the harmony of poetic utterance, of its kind unparalleled in English literature. It is probable that he was right in thinking so, and we may admit it without dreaming of endorsing his stated position. Tennyson was not the greatest poet who ever lived, but—and this is now apt to be somewhat overlooked—he possessed the qualities of poetic form in more perfect balance than any other. What Tennyson wanted, as we begin to see, was heat; he never quite burns. But if all his melody, and colour, and tenderness, and stateliness, and delicacy had been run up to a slightly higher temperature throughout, he would have been the greatest of poets. He did not race, to change the simile, quite hard enough, but he was in the centre of the course. The dominance of Tennyson drew the attention of the younger poets to the necessity of cultivating form. He seemed to have very little influence on the genius of Rossetti, of Matthew Arnold, and of Mr. Swinburne, yet his presence there, like a beacon, warned them of the reefs which await a neglect of colour, of lucidity, of music. The little group of poets which followed that generation—poets now greatly out of fashion, but, doubtless, destined to rediscovery—gave almost excessive attention, like their contemporaries, the Parnassians in France, to the mint and anise and cummin of form. Their rhymes and cadences were impeccable; they chose their words like jewels; and the vintage was sometimes rather thin in their fantastic Venetian glass. To this day, Mr. Austin Dobson, the most notable member of the group, is so remarkable for the perfection of his form, that some of his pieces—for instance, the little set of dramas in lyric, called "Proverbs in Porcelain"—could not conceivably be improved by the transposition of a single word. This is the culmination of poetic art, when it regards form as the essential thing.

Our new poets have marked the course of an interesting reaction. Mr. William Watson, who belongs by age to the end of the generation just described, has carried away from it an academic precision in form, without any preoccupation with its refinements. He is transitional. But by those still younger than he we find the "rules"—the formulas of art—more and more disregarded, and poems now receive appreciation for their vigour, or their intensity, or for their human interest, which would, twenty-five years ago, have been universally reprimanded as ragged. Through all the age of strict cultivation of form Robert Browning flourished, a sturdy and unconscious heretic; but Browning is a curious specimen of genius, difficult to class, because he possessed form in several directions, and could occasionally display it in those others in which he was rashly supposed to be deficient. The truth about Browning is that, occupied and entertained by the substance of what he was saying, he very rarely troubled himself about the form. He is the one exception in which it is not ridiculous to say, in the old saw, "He would have done better had he taken more pains." We have the impression that Mr. Hardy has taken immense pains, as every artist should. But he does not possess that plasticity which, to take a lighter example, Mr. Gilbert eminently displays in the best of his comic ballads and operas. The Bunthorne and Grosvenor duet in *Patience*, "Conceive me if you can," may not be a very lofty piece of imaginative art, but it displays in their quintessence the qualities which Mr. Hardy's verse lacks, the absolute mastery over diction, the ear that never makes a mistake, the knack which simply courts impossibilities for the sake of overcoming them at a touch. It seems only right that in the face of a volume of verse so violent and rugged as "Wessex Poems" we should protest that this is not the more excellent way of writing poetry. At the same time, every man must preserve his individuality, if he has one to preserve, as Mr. Hardy most assuredly has; and we have no reason to suppose that it is the desire of the author of "The Peasant's Confession" to found a school or issue a propaganda. On the contrary, it is far more likely that he has put forth his Wessex verses with extreme simplicity and modesty, not asking himself in what relation they stand to other people's poetry. As a matter of fact, the "Wessex Poems" will probably enjoy a double fate. They will supply to lovers of emotional narrative verse several poetic tales which they will lay up in memory among their treasures; and in time to come, professors of literary history, when observing the retrogression of an imaginative period, and when speaking of Lydgate, of Donne, of the Spasmodists here, of the Symbolists in France, will mention Mr. Hardy also as a signal example of the temporary success of a violent protest against the cultivation of form in verse.

We review elsewhere, as a first instalment, two books by an American and an Englishman on the campaign in Cuba. This is only the beginning of what promises to be a voluminous literature of the war, which comes as a godsend to the American book world. It needed the fillip which the actualities of war and adventure—seldom absent from our own publishers' lists—can alone supply. But the numerous American officers, who are as ready to wield the pen as

Athenæum,
Jan 14 1899

LITERATURE

Wessex Poems, and other Verses. By Thomas Hardy. (Harper & Brothers.)

It is not often that a writer at an advanced, if not quite the eleventh, hour essays two new arts at a blow. Nevertheless, this is the case with Mr. Hardy, who has not only published a volume of poetry, but has also adorned it with thirty drawings and designs from his own pencil. These illustrations, which recall the fact that Mr. Hardy was originally apprenticed in an architect's office, are thoroughly in keeping with some of the most marked characteristics of the book itself. Primitive in execution, and frequently inspired by a somewhat grim mortuary imagination, they are still full of poetry, and show a real sense of the decorative values of architectural outline and nocturnal landscape. Even without the verses, they are a new light on Wessex.

As for the verses themselves, many of which date back to the sixties, while some are of yesterday, it is difficult to say the proper word. Much that Mr. Hardy has amused himself by collecting is quite trifling, conceived in the crude ferments of youth, and expressed with woodenness of rhythm and a needlessly inflated diction. On the other hand, there are certain things which stand out unmistakably, not from their fellows merely, but from the ruck of modern verse as a whole. Two or three of these, which take more or less of a ballad form, are vigorous studies of types of Wessex character, and are marked by the observation and saturnine humour which one would naturally expect from the writer of Mr. Hardy's novels. Such are 'The Fire at Tranter Sweattey's,' one of the few pieces in the volume which have been printed before, and 'Valenciennes,' in which "Corp'l Tullidge" recalls the great fight and its disastrous results to his own hearing:—

"We 've fetched en back to quick from dead;
But never more on earth while rose is red
Will drum rouse Corpel!" Doctor said
O' me at Valencieën.

'Twer true. No voice o' friend or foe
Can reach me now, or any livèn beën;
And little have I power to know
Since then at Valencieën!

I never hear the zummer hums
O' bees; and don' know when the cuckoo comes;
But night and day I hear the bombs
We threw at Valencieën.....

As for the Duke o' Yark in war,
There be some volk whose judgment o' en is meän;
But this I say—'a was not far
From great at Valencieën.

O' wild wet nights, when all seems sad,
My wownds come back, as though new wownds I 'd had;
But yet—at times I 'm sort o' glad
I fout at Valencieën.

Well: Heaven wi' its jasper halls
Is now the on'y Town I care to be in.....
Good Lord, if Nick should bomb the walls
As we did Valencieën.

The majority, however, of Mr. Hardy's small cluster of really remarkable poems, even though they may be dramatic in their setting, are not so in their intention. They are personal utterances, voicing a matured and deliberate judgment on life, which has, indeed, found expression more than once in his novels. More than anything it was this that gave offence to the narrower minds in 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles.' "The President of the Immortals had finished his sport with Tess": this is the note upon which the tragedy ends. And this is the note, too, more or less, of all the poems in which Mr. Hardy really speaks, is really convincing. The tragedy of life as the outcome of the sport of freakish destinies: this is briefly the conception which dominates his inmost thought. And the mood of melancholy, or perhaps rather melancholic irritation, to which such a conception gives rise, is the one from which his verse must well, if it is to attain anything beyond a mediocre inspiration. From this spring the sombre irony and mournful music of what is perhaps his finest single effort, 'My Cicely.' A Londoner, hearing of the death of his Wessex love, sets out to visit her grave. The description of the journey is magnificent:—

I mounted a steed in the dawning
With achéful remembrance,
And made for the ancient West Highway
To far Exonb'ry.

Passing heaths, and the House of Long Sieging,
I neared the thin steeple
That tops the fair fane of Poore's olden
Episcopal see;

And, changing anew my onbearer,
I traversed the downland
Whereon the bleak hill-graves of Chieftains
Bulge barren of tree;

And still sadly onward I followed
That Highway the Icen,
Which trails its pale riband down Wessex
O'er lynchet and lea.

Along through the Stour-bordered Forum,
Where Legions had wayfared,
And where the slow river upglasses
Its green canopy,

And by Weatherbury Castle, and thereence
Through Casterbridge, bore I,
To tomb her whose light, in my deeming,
Extinguished had He.

On arriving, he learns that the dead lady is but a namesake. His has married beneath her, and keeps a hostel on the very road by which he had come. He had seen her, unrecognizing, as with liquor-fired face and thick accents she had jested with the tapsters:—

I backed on the Highway: but passed not
The hostel. Within there
Too mocking to Love's re-expression
Was Time's repartee!

He deludes himself with the fond belief that the dead one, "she of the garth," was his real love, "the true one":—

So, lest I disturb my choice vision,
I shun the West Highway,
Even now, when the knaps ring with rhythms
From blackbird and bee;

And feel that with slumber half-conscious
She rests in the church-hay,
Her spirit unsoiled as in youth-time
When lovers were we.

Equally uncompromising in its pessimism is 'Friends Beyond,' with its dream—as all these things are but dreams—of the cessation of life, the deadening of desire, in the grave. Here, again, the touch of Wessex makes the treatment singularly effective:—

William Dewy, Tranter Reuben, Farmer Ledlow late at plough,
Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,
And the Squire, and Lady Susan, lie in Mellstock churchyard now!

"Gone," I call them, gone for good, that group of local hearts and heads;
Yet at mothy curfew-tide,
And at midnight when the noon-heat breathes it back from walls and leads,

They 've a way of whispering to me—fellow-wight who yet abide—
In the muted, measured note
Of a ripple under archways, or a lone cave's stillicide:

"We have triumphed: this achievement turns the bane to antidote,
Unsuccesses to success,
Many thought-worn eves and morrows to a morrow free of thought.

No more need we corn and clothing, feel of old terrestrial stress;
Chill detraction stirs no sigh;
Fear of death has even bygone us: death gave all that we possess."

W.D. Ye mid burn the wold bass-viol that I set such vallie by.
Squire. You may hold the manse in fee,
You may wed my spouse, my children's memory of me may decry.

Lady. You may have my rich brocades, my laces; take each household key;
Ransack coffer, desk, bureau;
Quiz the few poor treasures hid there, con the letters kept by me.

Far. Ye mid zell my favourite heifer, ye mid let the charlock grow,
Foul the grinterns, give up thrift.
Wife. If ye break my best blue china, children, I shan't care or ho.

All. We 've no wish to hear the tidings, how the people's fortunes shift;
What your daily doings are;
Who are wedded, born, divided; if your lives beat slow or swift.

Curious not the least are we if our intents you make or mar,
If you quire to our old tune,
If the City stage still passes, if the weirs still roar afar.

—Thus, with very gods' composure, freed those crosses late and soon
Which, in life, the Trine allow
(Why, none witteth), and ignoring all that haps beneath the moon,

William Dewy, Tranter Reuben, Farmer Ledlow late at plough,
Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,
And the Squire, and Lady Susan, murmur mildly to me now.

We do not conceal our opinion that Mr. Hardy's success in poetry is of a very narrow range. He is entirely dependent for his inspiration upon this curiously intense and somewhat dismal vision of life, which is upon him almost as an obsession. Where he is not carried along by this, his movement is faltering, and his touch prosaic.

But within such close limits his achievement seems to us to be considerable, and to be of a kind with which modern poetry can ill afford to dispense. There is no finish or artifice about it: the note struck is strenuous, austere, forcible; it is writing that should help to give backbone to a literature which certainly errs on the side of flabbiness. And this applies to diction as well as sentiment. Very little of this volume is actually in dialect, but, on the other hand, Mr. Hardy is liberal in the introduction of vigorous and unworn provincialisms. Such forms, for instance, as "lynchet," "churchhay," and "knaps," to cull only from the poems quoted in this article, should do something to renew and refresh a somewhat wilted vocabulary.

The Saturday Review, Jan 7. 1899

REVIEWS

THOMAS HARDY AS POET.

"Wessex Poems, and other Verse." By Thomas Hardy. London and New York: Harper. 1898.

MR. HARDY enjoys a great reputation for his very clear, and sometimes powerful, presentation of the limited life of the country folk who live in a backwater out of the main stream of the world. Even more, his work has for some years been one of the important influences determining the estimate of life of many thoughtful, if imperfectly educated, people. We come, therefore, to anything he chooses to publish predisposed to respect. But as we read this curious and wearisome volume, these many slovenly, slipshod, uncouth verses, stilted in sentiment, poorly conceived and worse wrought, our respect lessens to vanishing-point, and we lay it down with the feeling strong upon us that Mr. Hardy has, by his own deliberate act, discredited that judgment and presentation of life on which his reputation rested. It is impossible to understand why the bulk of this volume was published at all—why he did not himself burn the verse, lest it should fall into the hands of the indiscreet literary executor, and mar his fame when he was dead.

The pieces of verse at the beginning of the volume are expressions of the feelings natural to every thoughtful young man coming to his first grips with life, and finding that his imaginings surpass its possibilities. There are the lines to the lady-love who has changed to grosser clay; there is the thought that suffering is more bitter because it falls from blind chance, and not from the flattering, if painful, action of some malignant deity; there is the lament that Nature is indifferent; that the children of a lady who has married another will not be so "high-purposed" as they would have been had she married Mr. Hardy; and there is the revulsion from love. The feelings do not ring quite sincere; they are not strongly felt; they are, in truth, the outpourings in verse common to all the weak, undeveloped natures of intelligent young men, and it is the custom to lock them away, or burn them. Only two of them, "The Heiress and the Architect," and "Neutral Tones," show any forecast of Mr. Hardy's mature strength.

Then comes a very pleasant ballad "Valenciennes," with two really good stanzas in it:

"I never hear the zummer hums
O' bees; and don' know when the cuckoo comes;
But night and day I hear the bombs
We threw at Valencieën."

And

"O' wild wet nights, when all seems sad,
My wownds come back, as though new wownds I'd had;
But yet—at times I'm sort o' glad
I fout at Valencieën."

There is in it a genuine realisation of the pathos of the old, shell-deafened pensioner's plight, the true insight into his feelings, and naturally the right form comes.

Of four of the other ballads it can only be said that they are some of the most amazing balderdash that ever found its way into a book of verse. In "San Sebastian" a sergeant, harrowed by remorse, tells the story of the siege of that city, and how Heaven has punished him for ravishing a young girl during the sack of it, by giving his daughter her eyes. In "Leipzig" a Casterbridge workman tells the story of Napoleon's defeat, as it was told him by his German mother,

"When she used to sing and pirouette,
And touse the tambourine
To the march that yon street-fiddler plies."

In "The Peasant's Confession" an improbable peasant tells how he led astray and killed an officer, who told him the gist of the orders he was carrying from Napoleon to Grouchy. The stories of the siege and of the battles are alike bald, mechanical, and lacking in spirit; while that essential quality of the ballad, a lilting easy flow, is entirely wanting. Consider such a verse as—

"With Gordon, Canning, Blackman, Ompteda,
L'Estrange, Delancey, Packe,
Grose, D'Oyly, Stables, Morice, Howard, Hay,
Von Schwerin, Watzdorf, Boek."

Even worse than these three is "The Alarm." "The Dance at the Phœnix," save for the idiotic lines

"But each with charger, sword, and gun,
Had bluffed the Biscay wave,"

is far better. It is better in story, and has the real ballad ring. While "My Cicely" is exceedingly interesting; for it is instinct with the feeling of Poe, and there sounds through it a far-away, faint echo of his peculiar music.

Mr. Hardy is hardly more fortunate with the poems which purport to be dramatic, than with his ballads of the wars of Napoleon. The situations in "The Burghers," when the husband surprises the flying lovers, and when he gives them gold and jewels for their livelihood, afford admirable opportunities for the display of dramatic power; but such is the poorness, the clumsiness rather, of the treatment, that they lose all their inherent dramatic force, and are entirely unreal, lifeless, and flat. The scene too in "Her Death and After," where the lover, for the sake of the dead wife's neglected child, blackens her name, and declares falsely to her husband that he is the child's father, is even more unreal. Consider the bald infelicity of this ending of their dialogue:

"—Sir, I've nothing more to say,"

"Save that, if you'll hand me my little maid,
I'll take her, and rear her, and spare you toil.
Think it more than a friendly act none can;
I'm a lonely man,
While you've a large pot to boil.

"If not, and you'll put it to ball or blade—
To-night, to-morrow night, anywhere— n/
I'll meet you here . . . But think of it,
And in season fit
Let me hear from you again."

Mr. Hardy reaches a higher level in the verse which he calls "personative" in conception. Such verses as "Friends Beyond," "Thoughts of Ph-a," "In a Eweleaze near Weatherbury," are instinct with the intimate, penetrating charm of real feeling, completely, strongly felt; they have the value of originality of sentiment and idea; and were the form equal to the matter, they would be poetry. Last of all comes a veritable poem, "I look into my glass." It is an original thought realised and felt completely; and the expression is so clear and simple, that it will surely live when the rest of the book has been forgotten:

"I look into my glass,
And view my wasting skin,
And say, 'Would God it came to pass
My heart had shrunk as thin!'

For then, I, undistrest
By hearts grown cold to me,
Could lonely wait my endless rest
With equanimity.

But Time, to make me grieve,
Part steals, lets part abide;
And shakes this fragile frame at eve
With throbbings of noontide."

THE BRITISH WEEKLY 22-12-'98

Correspondence of Claudius Clear

THOMAS HARDY AS A POET.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH WEEKLY.

SIR,—The editor of the *Academy* is asking a number of literary people to tell him what two books have most pleased and interested them during the year. He means, I believe, to get information as to what books of the year ought to be "crowned." I venture to think that the form of the question is unsatisfactory. Some books interest, but do not please, some books please but do not interest, some books neither please or interest, but are seen to be of great worth. Mr. Hardy's new volume of Wessex poems, published by Messrs. Harper, is not exactly a pleasing book, but it is full of interest. That Mr. Hardy was a poet every reader of his novels knew well enough. They could tell that he was a great poet. He has here thrown his poetry into verse, and by no means unsuccessfully. Yet it is as a great writer of prose, one of our very greatest, that he will permanently stand. Any experiment of so powerful a man claims close attention, and must receive it. It rewards attention; so much may be said undoubtedly. There are a few pieces at least in this volume that will remain in the memory when the work of younger poets by profession will be forgotten. And yet the Titan works with an instrument that he has not thoroughly proved. In other words, Mr. Hardy is not a great poet in the accepted sense.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to trace clearly any influences of Mr. Hardy's prose style. With his poetry it is different. There are a few passages here which bear the unmistakable stamp of Browning. For example, there is the following:

"She took my hand in her thin white own,
And smiled her thanks—though nigh too weak—
And made them a sign to leave us there,
Then faltered, ere
She could bring herself to speak.

"'Twas to see you before I go—he'll condone
Such a natural thing now my time's not much—
When Death is so near it hustles hence
All passioned sense
Between woman and man as such!

'My husband is absent. As heretofore
The City detains him. But, in truth,
He has not been kind. . . . I will speak no blame,
But—the child is lame;
O, I pray she may reach his ruth!'"

The next is the Scotch metrical version of the Psalms. I should hesitate to say this if I did not know that Mr. Hardy is familiar with hymnology. All through the book we meet rhymes like this:

"Then bitter self-reproaches as I stood,
I dealt me silently,
As one perverse—misrepresenting good,
In graceless mutiny."

What Scottish reader will not recall !

"Me cleanse from sin and throughly wash
From mine iniquity,
For my transgressions I confess,
My sin I ever see,"

and other lines like unto them? I shall quote presently a whole poem written in this manner, a manner to which I can recall no parallel out of the region of sacred verse. But curiously enough the decisive influence on this volume is that of Mr. Hardy's old friend and neighbour, William Barnes, the illustrious poet of Dorset. It is many and many a year since I visited Mr. Barnes at his beautiful rectory, and at that time the venerable poet pointed out the residence of Thomas Hardy, and spoke of his promise as a writer. To the *Athenæum*, Mr. Hardy contributed an obituary of his friend, and if I am not very much mistaken he reviewed that friend's life in the same journal, making the striking criticism that Barnes never showed himself alive to the beauty and the mystery of the sea. In sentiment the two great Dorsetshire writers are as far as possible apart. Barnes was a Christian optimist; Mr. Hardy is a pessimist in sad and deep earnest. And yet when I take up Mr. Barnes' poems, especially his English poems, it seems as if they should stand by these Wessex poems. Mr. Hardy te us in the beginning that he uses ancient and legitimate words of the district, and so did Barnes. It may be added that Mr. Hardy has the trick of combining words. For example, we have "ever-nipping time," "wind-swept sedge," "glow-forsaken," "darkness-overtaken," "nigh-regarding," "a breath-while," and so forth. Barnes was even more daring, with phrases like "a few-yeared mother," "blushing-skied sunset," "red-skied-west," "pale-beamed stars," "labour-wearied limbs," and the like. Mr. Hardy's metres have sometimes more lilt than Mr. Barnes', but Barnes could sing too.

"Wi h the sun glowing warm at its height,
And the people at work in white sleeves,
And the gold-banded bee in its flight,
With the quick flitting birds among leaves."

But perhaps the metrical influence in Mr. Hardy's poems is chiefly that of Browning. I have given one example, tolerably conclusive, and another may be added:

"William Dewy, Tranter Reuben, Farmer Ledlow late at plough,
Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,
And the Squire, and Lady Susan, lie in Mell-stock churchyard now!

"'Gone,' I call them, gone for good, that group of local hearts and heads,
Yet at mothy curfew-tide,
And at midnight when the noon-heat breathes it back from walls and leads,

"They've a way of whispering to me—fellow-wight who yet abide—
In the muted, measured note
Of a ripple under archways, or a lone cave's stillicide."

In each of the three cases there is an effort made to set further back the bounds of our English speech, and the immediate result is to give an aspect not unwelcome, but apparently foreign and strange.

But the chief interest about Mr. Hardy's poems is their self-revelation. Too much stress must not be laid on this. Mr.

Hardy says in the preface: "The pieces are in a large degree dramatic or personative in conception, and this even where they are not obviously so." He is entitled to have this claim conceded in its full integrity. Yet from the dates given it is evident that Mr. Hardy's conception of the universe as ruled by "purblind Doomsters" is very old with him, dating more than thirty years back. All is vanity and vexation of spirit. If love is found, it is not the love that was sought, and it soon wanes. It is even perhaps better not to love than to feel a hot-ado of fevered hopes, and then chilling. There is none righteous, no, not one. Beauty perishes before the moth. The shadow of untruth falls sooner or later upon everything. The enthusiasms of middle age have behind them a secret of deep misgiving, of assurance rather, that they are futile, and will soon pass away. The dead and none but the dead are to be envied. Death rounds their lives with a majesty which living failed to bestow. The living are tracked by remorse and fear and desire and mocking, but the dead in the churchyard are at peace from our "terrestrial stress," and ignore all "that haps beneath the moon." With Barnes the whole atmosphere is different. Life is good, love is lasting, God is kind. It is not that Barnes fails to see that some things in life are irremediable in the world, and this verse of his might almost have been written by Mr. Hardy.

"Was it when once I miss'd a call
To rise, and thenceforth seem'd to fall,
Or when my wife to my hands left
Her few bright keys, a doleful heft,
Or when before the door I stood
To watch a child away for good,
Or where some crowd
In mirth was loud,
Or where I saw a mourner sigh,
Where did my joy all pass me by."

But this is an unaccustomed note in Barnes' poetry. It is worth pointing out how differently the two regard the fading away of beauty. Does the husband still love, when the wife's comeliness has long vanished? Mr. Hardy says:—

"I marked her ruined hues,
Her custom-straitened views,
And asked, 'Can there indwell
My Amabel?'

"I looked upon her gown,
Once rosé, now earthen brown;
The change was like the knell
Of Amabel.'

"Her step's mechanic ways
Had lost the life of May's;
Her laugh, once sweet in swell,
Spoilt Amabel."

Mr. Barnes says:

"The bloom that woonce did ove rspread
Your rounded cheäk as time we nt by,
A-shrinkèn to a patch o' red,
Did feäde so soft the evenèn sky:
The evenèn sky, my faithful wife,
O' days as feäirs our happy life."

These comparisons must not be pushed too far. I believe that it is a great fallacy to think that any poet or any writer tells his real secret in his books. It may be doubted whether he ever tells it at all. What are called biographies are wide of the mark by millions of miles. Browning said much, but he claimed "Mine remains the unproffered soul." Still, perhaps we may take it that Mr. Hardy is speaking for himself in two poems which I shall venture to quote. The first is addressed to a lady offended by a book of the writer's.

"Now that my page upcloses, doomed, maybe,
Never to press thy cosy cushions more,
Or wake thy ready Yeas as heretofore,
Or stir thy gentle vows of faith in me:

"Knowing thy natural receptivity,
I figure that, as flambeaux banish eve,
My sombre image, warped by insidious heave
Of those less forthright, must lose place in thee.

"So be it. I have borne such. Let thy dreams
Of me and mine diminish day by day,
And yield their space to shine of smugger things;
Till I shape to thee but in brief gleams,
And then in far and feeble visitings,
And then surcease. Truth will be truth alway."

The other is entitled: "The Impercipient" (at a Cathedral Service).

"That from this bright believing band
An outcast I should be,
That faith by which my comrades stand
Seem fantasies to me,
And mirage-mists their Shining Land,
Is a dreary destiny.

"Why thus my soul should be consigned
To infelicity,
Why always I must feel as blind
To sights my brethren see,
Why joys they've found I cannot find,
Abides a mystery.

"Since heart of mine knows not the ease
Which they know; since it be
That He who breathes All's-Well to these
Breathes no All's-Well to me,
My lack might move their sympathies
And Christian charity!

"I am like a gazer who should mark
An inland company
Standing up-fingered with 'Hark! hark!
The glorious distant sea!'
And feel, 'Alas, 'tis but yon dark
And wind-swept pine to me!'

"Yet I would bear my shortcomings
With meet tranquillity,
But for the charge that blessed things
I'd liefer have unbe.
O, doth a bird deprived of wings
Go earth-bound wilfully?

"Enough. As yet disquiet clings
About us. Rest shall be."

It is the cup of prison water passed round to those who darkly despair. Mark Rutherford puts it: "In a few short years we shall be at rest. We are surrounded by the soundless depths in which the stars repose."

I am, sir, yours etc.,
CLAUDIUS CLEAR.

Basil Regis, Middlesex, Tuesday.

from the Westminster Review
August 99

THE POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY.

Of the crowd of English novelists who during the present century have poured forth fiction in such lavish abundance, there are probably not more than half-a-dozen whose books will be read in a hundred years to come. Amongst this half-dozen we think Mr. Thomas Hardy is certain to have a place. He has been well described as one of the greatest living masters of English prose. His style has not the brilliancy and vigour of Ruskin or the rugged intensity of Carlyle, but it has charms of its own which are in perfect harmony with the peaceful rural scenes in the midst of which his dramas are mainly enacted. There is no straining after effect in his writing; the diction is always calm and clear, rich and varied, eloquent and beautifully adapted to the purpose which the author has in view.

Apart from qualities of style, however, Mr. Hardy's books will endure, because as clearly-drawn and living pictures of rural England—perhaps we ought to say, of rural South England—they have no rivals. We should judge that Mr. Hardy is in sympathy with the spirit of the saying that "God made the country, but man made the town." He seems to shun, in his books, the scenes and associations of towns. If he enters them at all, it is only for a very brief period, and he quickly beats a retreat to the lanes and fields and farmhouses which he loves so well. Yet amidst these dull and quiet surroundings what comedies and tragedies unfold themselves beneath the magic of his pen! His books are evidence, if such evidence were necessary, that the greatest of all dramas—those of the human heart—are largely independent of surroundings, and may be played as effectively in a quiet village as in the midst of a great city.

It is not surprising to find that Mr. Hardy is a poet as well as a novelist. Great prose-writers are usually able to write fair, if not great, poetry, although they may not care to exercise their talent much in this direction. Ruskin, Carlyle, Macaulay, Sir Walter Scott, and George Eliot are cases in point. And although Sir Walter Scott and George Eliot wrote a considerable amount of verse, it is as novelists, and not as poets, that their fame is assured.

Mr. Hardy's *Wessex Poems and Other Verses* may be roughly divided into two classes—the narrative and the philosophical. Some

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LOUIS ZANGWILL.

Evening Post
Feb 1 1899

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We do not believe that Thomas Hardy will ever win fame as a poet, though it may be if he had not won such a reputation as a master of prose and as one of the greatest fiction writers of the present century his new volume, entitled "Wessex Poems," would have been hailed by the critics as marking the advent of a poet who, they might say, would "have to be reckoned with." However this may be, it does not seem to us quite fair to dismiss the book with a sneer. There is much poetry in the world that is not great which the world would, nevertheless, regret to lose. And every one knows that whatever may be said of Mr. Hardy he is at least no trifler, but a serious force in the literary life of his time. In the present volume the same note of sadness is distinguished that is so clearly sounded in his prose. There is disappointment, disillusion, despair and, through all, the same old feeling of the inevitableness of things with which we are so well acquainted. Here is a specimen:

We stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod,
—They had fallen from an ash, and were grey.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
Over tedious riddles solved years ago;
And some words played between us to and fro—
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing
Alive enough to have strength to die;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing. . . . .

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wring with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curséd sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with grayest leaves.

We do not quote this as an illustration of the poet's form, but to show the dominant note of sadness. There are other poems in the book that are much more musical. For instance, this one, entitled "Her Initials.":

Upon a poet's page I wrote
Of old two letters of her name:
Part seemed she of the effulgent thought
Whence that high singer's rapture came.
—When now I turn the leaf the same
Immortal light illumes the day
But from the letters of her name
The radiance had died away.

Where Mr. Hardy fails most obviously is in his attempts at the light and trivial, and there are several of these in this volume. Nor do we think that his ballads are notably successful. As to his dialect, we will not speak further than to say that it is presumably accurate. But it makes, as a rule, bad verse. As might have been expected, where the poet is dealing with nature, or with the deeper or more gloomy sentiments, he does his best work, though even in many of these the form is as faulty as in many of Browning's poems, with the difference, that in Hardy, one misses that sense of power which is felt even in the worst of Browning's work, and also misses the subtler harmonies that are almost always to be discerned in the poems of the great English poet. When Mr. Hardy is obscure, and some of these poems are not easy reading, he is simply obscure without any of the redeeming qualities which always seem to make a wrestle with Browning well worth the effort put forth to master him.

One can not but recognise the self-restraint of Mr. Hardy. Many of these poems were written thirty and more years ago, and of them all only four have hitherto been published. We are not going to say that he would have done well to keep the rein on himself and still hold his poems from the world. On the contrary, it seems to us most interesting to have this volume from his pen. Men naturally like to try their skill in strange arts. Raphael is reported by Browning to have written "a century of sonnets," and Dante to have painted a picture. The feeling is entirely natural. But more than that, every true lover of a great man and his work has something of the same feeling. He desires to see what his hero can do in strange fields. And we do not believe that there is a real admirer of the great English novelist, who has given the world so much pleasure by his fiction, and is to-day the foremost figure in his own imaginative world, that will not be glad to read his poems. And he will get pleasure out of the perusal, not only from the association, but from many of the poems themselves. They are certainly not to be commended as a whole, but they are the work of an earnest, thoughtful man, not without some poetic instinct, and as such they are entitled to a respectful consideration. While any praise of them must be bestowed with reserve, we think that condemnation also ought to be tempered with restraint. The book, it seems to us, is interesting and valuable. (Harper & Brothers, New York and London. The Bowen-Merrill Company, Indianapolis.)

ideals, and the title of the book—the *Two Standards*—drawn from the *Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius*, reminds us that higher methods might be found for winning followers to the standard that claims Dr. Barry as a soldier.

A writer is, of course, fully free to choose his subject: one can but regret that to the flimsy phantasies of the brain is given so much of that time which, devoted to the illumination of the great minds of the past, would secure a more enduring place in literature for Dr. Barry

P. A. SILLARD.

of them we might be inclined to place under the head of ideally imaginative or sentimental, but for the author's statement in his preface "that the pieces are in a large degree dramatic or personative in conception; and this even where they are not obviously so," which may imply that the apparently imaginative pieces have or had some suggestion in fact. Throughout the volume, the poetry, though not of the first order, maintains a high level of excellence. Mr. Hardy's verse has not the exquisite finish of Tennyson, the fervour and spirituality of Shelley, or the magnificent eloquence and polish of Byron, but it is nearly always good, readable, and interesting, and we venture to think that it is sufficient both in quantity and quality to give him an honourable place amongst the minor poets of our time.

There are fifty-one poems in this volume. Mr. Hardy tells us that many of them "were written long ago, and others partly written," and indeed quite a number are dated 1866. The dates of the verses seem to suggest that if Mr. Hardy had not been a great novelist he might have been a great poet. Since that early time his intellectual energy has been completely absorbed by the great prose works in which his genius has found such abundant and inimitable expression. But the qualities which mark his novels are also stamped upon his poems. Take the exquisite little piece entitled, "She—at His Funeral," and dated 187—. We quote it entire:

"They bear him to his resting-place—
In slow procession sweeping by;
I follow at a stranger's space;
His kindred they, his sweetheart I.
Unchanged my gown of garish dye,
Though sable-sad is their attire;
But they stand round with griefless eye,
Whilst my regret consumes like fire!"

Here we have a suggestion of the tragedy of blighted love, untimely death and broken hearts, which forms the theme of many of the novels.

It is, however, the distinctly narrative poems which most deeply rivet the attention, such as "San Sebastian," "Leipzig," and "The Peasant's Confession." "The Peasant's Confession" is a particularly fine poem. It contains 140 lines, and purports to explain why Grouchy failed to relieve his Imperial master on the fateful field of Waterloo. The incident is, of course, well known. With his splendid army of 30,000 men Grouchy should have stepped between the British and the Prussian forces, engaging Blücher's attention while the Emperor disposed of Wellington. But, fortunately for Europe, Grouchy remained inert at Wavre, Blücher was allowed to sweep up to Waterloo to the assistance of the British, and Napoleon

was finally overwhelmed. With the license of poet and novelist combined, Mr. Hardy in "The Peasant's Confession" suggests a solution of the enigma presented by Grouchy's conduct. In extreme old age the peasant of this poem tells his father confessor the story of his treachery to the officer whom Napoleon despatched to find Grouchy at Wavre and to instruct him to strike between the Prussians and the British. In the middle of the night the peasant is aroused by this officer:

> "Had I seen Grouchy? Yes? which track took he?
> Could I lead thither on?
> Fulfilment would ensure gold pieces three,
> Perchance more gifts anon."

The peasant undertakes to conduct this messenger to Grouchy, but, moved by selfish considerations, determines to lead him altogether astray. The officer having briefly informed his guide of the purport of his mission:

> "I mused: If Grouchy thus instructed be,
> The clash comes sheer hereon;
> My farm is stript. While as for pieces three,
> Money the French have none."

The messenger is led away from Grouchy instead of towards him, and only when too late is he fully convinced of the treachery of his guide.

> "He turned to pistol me. I sprang, and drew
> The sabre from his flank,
> And 'twixt his nape and shoulder, ere he knew,
> I struck, and dead he sank.
>
> I hid him deep in nodding rye and oat—
> His shroud green stalks and loam;
> His requiem the corn blade's husky note—
> And then I hastened home . . . ."

The peasant saved his farm, but he bitterly repents his falsehood to the "cause once prized!"

> "To Almighty God henceforth I stand confessed,
> And Virgin-Saint Marie;
> O Michael, John, and Holy Ones in rest,
> Entreat the Lord for me!"

Several of the poems deal with the eventful times of the first Napoleon, and their deep human interest and dramatic power suggest the reflection that, if Mr. Hardy could for once be induced to leave his beloved Wessex, he might perhaps weave a great historical romance of those stirring years.

"Her Death and After" is a powerfully-written poem, conceived

in the spirit of grim sadness, which is characteristic of much of Mr. Hardy's prose work. A lover of bygone days is summoned to the death-bed of the woman who had jilted him and married another, and who is dying in childbirth. Her husband has not been kind, and she fears that the child, which is lame, will not be treated well by him. Her regret for the past, and anxiety as to the future, find passionate expression in the following lines:

"Forgive past days—I can say no more—
Maybe if we'd wedded you'd now repine! . . .
But I treated you ill. I was punished. Farewell!
— Truth shall I tell?
Would the child were yours and mine!

As a wife I was true. But such my unease
That, could I insert a deed back in time,
I'd make her yours, to secure your care;
And the scandal bear,
And the penalty for the crime!"

She dies, and the lover is a frequent visitor at her tomb. One evening he is followed by the husband, who requests him to discontinue these visits, which have been noised abroad:

"For the mother of my first-born you
Show mind undue!
— Sir, I've nothing more to say."

In a moment of sudden inspiration, the lover then avows (falsely, of course) that he is the father of the child, and asks that she shall be handed to him, or that the matter shall be put to "ball or blade." At length the child is sent, and:

"Next a writing came: 'Since the child was the fruit
Of your passions brute,
Pray take her to right a wrong.'

And I did. And I gave the child my love,
And the child loved me, and estranged us none.
But compunctions loomed; for I'd harmed the dead
By what I'd said
For the good of the living one.

— Yet though, God wot, I am sinner enough,
And unworthy the woman who drew me so,
Perhaps this wrong for her darling's good
She forgives, or would
If only she could know!"

Of those which we have ventured to describe as the philosophical poems, perhaps the most striking are the two pieces entitled,

"Nature's Questioning" and "The Impercipient (At a Cathedral Service)." Probably in these stanzas the author voices some of his deepest thoughts and feelings on those eternal problems of Existence which have ever occupied the souls of thinking men. The voices of Nature ask:

"Has some vast Imbecility,
Mighty to build and blend,
But impotent to tend,
Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry?
* * * *
Or is it that some high Plan betides,
As yet not understood,
Of Evil stormed by Good,
We the Forlorn Hope over which Achievement strides?"

"The Impercipient" is a beautiful little poem. There is a note of pathos in it which Mr. Hardy, sad and grimly tragic as much of his writing is, does not often touch. The spectacle presented is that of an unbeliever standing in a cathedral during service, but unable, through lack of faith, to take part therein:

"That from this bright believing band
An outcast I should be,
That faiths by which my comrades stand
Seem fantasies to me,
And mirage-mist their Shining-Land,
Is a drear destiny.
* * * *
Since heart of mine knows not that ease
Which they know; since it be
That He who breathes All's Well to these
Breathes no All's Well to me,
My lack might move their sympathies
And Christian charity."

There are not many poems in this volume which are without interest, even for the general reader, but perhaps the most deeply interesting, besides those to which we have already referred, are: "The Dance at the Phœnix," "My Cicely," "Friends Beyond," "In a Wood," "The Slow Nature," "The Fire at Tranter Sweatley's," and "The Two Men." The thirty illustrations by the author form an interesting feature of the book, and serve to show that Mr. Hardy's skill with the pencil is of no mean order.

Mr. Hardy's fame is so great that it would perhaps be difficult for him to add to it by the publication of any one book, and especially by a book of poems. But at least we may say that his verse does not detract from his reputation, that it may even help to extend the circle of his readers, and that it will probably deepen the public interest in his fascinating stories.

W. B. Columbine.

N York
Bookman.
March 1899

The most serious and important book in *belles-letters* I have seen is Mr. Hardy's *Wessex Poems*. Two or three thoroughly intelligent reviews of this remarkable work have appeared, but many critics seem to have missed the meaning. Mr. Hardy has been obviously influenced in his verse by Shakespeare, in the Sonnets by Browning, and especially so far as mere form goes by his old friend and neighbour, William Barnes, the Dorset poet. Nobody has pointed out, so far as I know, that in his thought he has borrowed much from Heine. Heine has a lightness and a grace which Mr. Hardy cannot claim. The English novelist is more resolutely gloomy, and yet perhaps less despairing; he has been able to make for himself some pillow out of the darkness. Some critic might find material for an excellent piece of work in a comparison between Heine and Hardy. I have not been able to lay my hands upon the passage in Hardy's novels in which Heine is referred to, but I am sure there is a passage.

N York
Cosmopolitan
March 1899

Mr. Hardy's versification is undeniably open to much criticism on purely technical grounds; nevertheless I am inclined to think his poetry is great in the same degree as his prose romances. At any rate, they must stand or fall together, according to the particular judgment passed, by reason of the one and the same spirit we feel behind them, and of the similarity of impression and emotion caused by both. This shows how truly individual is Hardy's work; for these verses are the product of different periods of his life, some of them having been kept by him unpublished for thirty years. Obviously it would be wrong to take them in a routine sort of way. Rather should we look upon them as something very special helping us to affirm and complete our vision of the man. He gives us true poetry, even when the metrical structure is of the rudest; there is a big sense of life, naked and unrelenting yet distinctively tinged, surging through the simplest stanza. Before such poetic reality, technical criticism must be silent. The drawings from Mr. Hardy's own pencil that accompany the poems—"rough sketches," he calls them, "inserted for personal and local reasons rather than for their intrinsic qualities"—strangely enlist attention, and of course invite friendly interest rather than criticism. They are richly varied from landscape to decorative design, and, while displaying an evident aptness in the handling of the pencil, are more notably characterized by an interpretative quality that is rare even in finished draftsmanship.

Wessex Poems.

LOUIS ZANGWILL.

Indianapolis
Tribune
Feb 5. 1899

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Upon a poet's page I wrote
Of old two letters of her name:
Part seemed she of the effulgent thought
Whence that high singer's rapture came.
—When now I turn the leaf the same
Immortal light illumes the day
But from the letters of her name
The radiance had died away.

Where Mr. Hardy fails most obviously is in his attempts at the light and trivial, and there are several of these in this volume. Nor do we think that his ballads are notably successful. As to his dialect, we will not speak further than to say that it is presumably accurate. But it makes, as a rule, bad verse. As might have been expected, where the poet is dealing with nature, or with the deeper or more gloomy sentiments, he does his best work, though even in many of these the form is as faulty as in many of Browning's poems, with the difference, that in Hardy, one misses that sense of power which is felt even in the worst of Browning's work, and also misses the subtler harmonies that are almost always to be discerned in the poems of the great English poet. When Mr. Hardy is obscure, and some of these poems are not easy reading, he is simply obscure without any of the redeeming qualities which always seem to make a wrestle with Browning well worth the effort put forth to master him.

One can not but recognize the self-restraint of Mr. Hardy. Many of these poems were written thirty and more years ago, and of them all only four have hitherto been published. We are not going to say that he would have done well to keep the rein on himself and still hold his poems from the world. On the contrary, it seems to us most interesting to have this volume from his pen. Men naturally like to try their skill in strange arts. Raphael is reported by Browning to have written "a century of sonnets," and Dante to have painted a picture. The feeling is entirely natural. But more than that, every true lover of a great man and his work has something of the same feeling. He desires to see what his hero can do in strange fields. And we do not believe that there is a real admirer of the great English novelist, who has given the world so much pleasure by his fiction, and is to-day the foremost figure in his own imaginative world, that will not be glad to read his poems. And he will get pleasure out of the perusal, not only from the association, but from many of the poems themselves. They are certainly not to be commended as a whole, but they are the work of an earnest, thoughtful man, not without some poetic instinct, and as such they are entitled to a respectful consideration. While any praise of them must be bestowed with reserve, we think that condemnation also ought to be tempered with restraint. The book, it seems to us, is interesting and valuable. (Harper & Brothers, New York and London. For sale by Bowen-Merrill Company, Indianapolis.)

Poems of the Past & the Present.

THE BOOKMAN. JANUARY, 1902.]

A NEW NOTE OF POETIC MELANCHOLY.*

By Sir George Douglas, Bart.

* "Poems of the Past and of the Present." By Thomas Hardy. 6s. (Harpers.)

IN strength of literary interest Mr. Hardy's new volume of verse very much surpasses its predecessor. Of the "Wessex Poems" it might be said, perhaps justly, that they were interesting chiefly in the light of other books—that is to say, when viewed as *πάρεργα* or literary recreations of a great master of prose. For those pieces contained in the book which were at once novel and distinctive were either too few or too slight to give it substantial character. Of the present volume this can by no means be said. On the contrary, had it appeared anonymously, it would still have attracted, or at least deserved, attention. For it contributes something both new and powerful to the interpretation or criticism of life. That something, which I have described as a new note of poetic melancholy, is not, however, reached at once. Opening with some loyal lines on the late Queen, the book goes on to present a sheaf of War Poems, which differ from the serviceable Kiplingisms and Begbie-isms of the hour most notably in this, that they dwell not on the glory, but on the piteousness of the struggle. Like other gods, in Mr. Hardy's view, the God of Battles has had his day, and now enters upon his twilight, or period of obscuration. In this section unstrained pathos, vividness of presentment, and a happy, homely jingle, combine to raise one poem, "The Going of the Battery," above the rest. The Poems of Pilgrimage, which follow, deal with little experiences or impressions of travel. They are interesting to students and admirers of the author's work, and if they add nothing to his reputation at least take nothing from it. And now we reach the core of the book—the Miscellaneous Poems so called, though they are in fact the poems which have the most definite common characteristics and contribute most to a definite cumulative effect. And be it said at once that this effect is one of a pessimism which leaves Leopardi's pessimism far behind, and makes that of James Thomson, of "The City of Dreadful Night," seem little more than posture-making.

The superiority is portentous; how has it been obtained? Chiefly, perhaps, by process of elimination. Those elements in the poetry of the two authors cited which made for consolation are here conspicuous by absence. . . . . He lacks the impeccable artistic quality to which the study of a Tennyson, or a William Watson, has accustomed the fastidious reader. On the other hand, as was to be expected, he steers quite clear of that empty smoothness which is the besetting fault of the "Parnassian" Poets. Another notable technical feature in this book is the number of new and unfamiliar words employed—as many as, or more than, were added to our knowledge of the Greek language by the lately-found poems of Bacchylides. Thus Mr. Hardy gives us, among adjectives, "webby," "crescive," "fulgid," "ghast," "multi-marbled," "englamoured," "illimited," "leopardine"; among nouns, "nimb" (for nimbus), "gravure," "palinody," "deficience"; among verbs, "outskeleton," "tokening," "annunciate," "unknow," "retrocede," "blandish," "hueing"; and among adverbs, "abrim," "creaturely," "blestly," and "sereward." It will be interesting to observe if any of these vocables are adopted into common use. — - - -

This being so, what quality, we ask, compensates for these missing graces, and so entitles the new volume to be compared as poetry with the older ones? The answer is, a sheer stark power in the statement of conclusions, which are put forth in poetic form indeed, yet blankly, and untempered by the *softening* influence of art. Their beauty is the beauty of the austere; the forbidding fairness we have seen in limits set up by nature's self—a precipice or mountain side, which seems to bear upon its face in scarcely cryptic writing the legend "Thus far, and no further." But here the boundary has been set to control thought, not action.

Manchester Guardian, Dec 4 1901

MR. THOMAS HARDY'S POEMS.*

Various of the poems now collected by Mr. Hardy into this substantial volume have already been published in newspapers and magazines, and in a short preface he describes "that portion which may be regarded as individual" as possessing "little cohesion of thought or harmony of colouring." We are not so sure of this, for these "unadjusted impressions" bear, almost without exception, the stamp of the peculiar pessimism which seems to penetrate Mr. Hardy's work in prose and verse. A first-rate artist in a new medium is always interesting, and it will hardly be contested that the author of "The Return of the Native" and "The Woodlanders" and "Jude the Obscure" is at least a "potential" poet. His verse may hardly be considered, as in the cases of Mr. Meredith and Mr. Kipling, the serious rival of his prose, but it is a considerable part of his life and work, a real expression of his personality and a serious contribution to the life and thought of his time. Perhaps at the moment the "War Poems" will be read with the most interest. The impact upon such a nature of a fresh tragic element has roused him to a kind of incredulity; in such a world the irony of this addition to its burdens is overwhelming. He writes "A Christmas Ghost Story":—

South of the Line, inland from far Durban,
A mouldering soldier lies—your countryman.
Awry and doubled up are his grey bones,
And on the breeze his puzzled phantom moans
Nightly to clear Canopus: "I would know
By whom and when the All-Earth-gladdening Law
Of Peace, brought in by that Man Crucified,
Was ruled to be inept, and set aside?
And what of logic or of truth appears
In tacking 'Anno Domini' to the years?
Near twenty hundred liveried thus have hied,
But tarries yet the Cause for which He died."

This is, to Mr. Hardy, the timely word. If, he seems to say, these great or inflated ideas of empire would prevail, they must take count of this grim reality—a reality that may provoke quite another set of ideals. In "The Sick God" he gives us a curious, ironical depreciation of the God of Battles—

He scarce impassions champions now;
They do and dare, but tensely—pale of brow;

and "The Souls of the Slain," full of imagination and a ghostly pathos, is the claim for the "old homely acts" in opposition to all the flimsiness of fame and glory. Perhaps nothing is finer in this division of the poems than "The Going of the Battery" and the sonnet on "Embarcation." It is interesting to find in the "Poems of Pilgrimage" the curious preoccupation with material things in a subject so ethereal as "Shelley's Skylark," and in these poems of place it appears that it is rarely the freshness of impressions, but rather the eternal aspects that appeal to him.

In the main section of "Miscellaneous Poems" we find a concentrated pessimism that in the novels is qualified by action and description. "Life has bared its bones to me" is the perpetual burden, and from this there is no rebound. The childlike irony of "God-forgotten" represents the Creator dimly recalling, at the appeal of his creature, the existence of the earth in which he had lost interest. The same theme is pursued in "The Bedridden Peasant," and "The Song of Hope" is no more than an attempt at the renouncement of sorrow. In "The Puzzled Game-Birds" Mr. Hardy wrests the triolet to strange uses, and his sombre ballads might seem to come from a world of tombs. In all this there is a want of variety and, as life is various, a want of breadth. Yet it is something that misery may be expanded to noble proportions, and there is here no whimpering of the selfish, introspective spirit. Mr. Hardy speaks not for himself but for his kind. It is the voice of a steadfast soul in the dark, and with something of the dark's fantastic imaginings. Though never a facile versifier, Mr. Hardy writes in many elaborate metres with accomplishment. We quote three stanzas from "To an Unborn Pauper Child" as an example of his full and measured style:—

Hark, how the peoples surge and sigh,
And laughters fail, and greetings die:
Hopes dwindle; yea,
Faiths waste away,
Affections and enthusiasms numb;
Thou canst not mend these things if thou dost come.
Had I the ear of wombed souls
Ere their terrestrial chart unrolls,
And thou wert free
To cease, or be,
Then would I tell thee all I know,
And put it to thee: Wilt thou take Life so?
Vain vow! No hint of mine may home
To theeward fly; to thy locked sense
Explain none can
Life's pending plan:
Thou wilt thy ignorant entry make
Though skies spout fire and blood and nations quake.

* Poems of the Past and the Present. By Thomas Hardy. London: Harper and Brothers. Pp. xi. 260. 6s.

Glasgow Herald, Nov 28. 1901.

"Poems of the Past and the Present." By Thomas Hardy. (London and New York: Harper & Brothers.)

Mr Hardy's volume of "Wessex Poems," published in 1898, was received with sincere and even profound appreciation by thoughtful critics and readers. They found in the book signs of deep thought, and proofs of pure poetic form. There was nothing in it of the easy, brilliant, or flashing optimism of much contemporary verse. It was said of one piece, the "Dance at the Phœnix," that it was full of Mr Hardy's "bitter humour and relentless handling of the irony of human fortunes," and that it was just the touch of "sardonic comedy" which gave the poem its distinction, and justified its form, which was certainly startling, because it belonged to the unexpected in human experience. Something of the same kind may be said of much in "Poems of the Past and the Present." Mr Hardy is no maker of mere pleasing verses. His themes relate for the most part to the sturdier and sterner phases of experience. They palpitate with life, but they touch us and impress us with the feeling that they are condensed fragments of fate. We are compelled to value highly Mr Hardy's work, because we find in it a poet and philosopher of infinite courage. His romance is tragic, but is the tragedy of moral reality, seen from the side which too many poets lack the courage to face. His work, whether in prose or verse, is a powerful corrective of superficial sentiment and sentimentality. His former volume contained some 30 illustrations by himself, all marked by the tone of thought in the verse. The new book, which has no illustrations, has three main divisions—"War Poems," "Poems of Pilgrimage," and "Miscellaneous Poems." Each section is full of remarkable matter. Of the war pieces, some are tenderly pathetic, but the most remarkable are "The Souls of the Slain" and "The Sick God." This is the God of Battles, whose career is traced historically down to the present time, when but a shade is left of him:—

"Let men rejoice, let men deplore,
The hand [illegible]
Responsive to one of power and
The [illegible] and is good no more."

II. (W. D. Howells.)

Whatever any one may say of Mr. Markham's optimism, no one can say of Mr. Thomas Hardy's pessimism, that it is less in his second volume than it was in his first, and I, for my part, could not wish it less, for pessimism may be a very good thing, if not a cheerful. It is apt, at least, to be spontaneous and honest after one gets to be fifty, and ashamed of the follies of forty—in others. There is, possibly, too much unreasoned gayety in a world where death is, and youth fades and love passes, often before death comes. Pessimism can commonly give a reason for itself, and optimism at most only the excuse that it is a fine day, or its dinner has agreed with it. But even pessimism without a cause, if it results in poetry like Mr. Hardy's, is justifiable, and if it is his increased pessimism which has made "Poems of the Past and Present" better than "Wessex Poems," one must wish it to abound in him more and more. In the meantime, I have been reading his new book with the solid comfort which sometimes only solid gloom can bring, and I have felt very curiously in his poems the qualities which, in more dramatic appointments, affect me finally from his fiction; it is as if I had been reading all his novels over again. The humor, indeed, except in the sparest glimmers, is absent, for one can hardly call the grim mocking in certain of the pieces by that kindly name, that almost weakly sentimental name; and there is no compensation in the way of the smoother and sleeker shapes of beauty, though if one likes such forms of it as do not know themselves from truth, one will not want for joy in these joyless portraits and landscapes. There is not even the small sum of impersonated feeling that there was in the "Wessex Poems"; the thinking is straight from the poet to the reader, with seldom an interpreter in character or story, though there is now and then a sardonic allegory, and now and then an interlude of such an eery mirthsomeness that one could wish it less merry or less ghastly. For illustration, I commend to the robuster sort of reader that peculiar "riddle of the painful earth" which the poet calls "God-Forgotten." I must not risk shrivelling this sensitive page by giving it here entire, and may only intimate that the poet fancies the Creator to have forgotten that He had made the earth and to be recalling the fact with difficulty.

. . . . . .

"'It lost my interest from the first,
My aims therefor succeeding ill;
Haply it died of doing as it durst?'"—
"'Lord, it existeth still.'"

"'Dark, then, its life! For not a cry
Of aught it bears do I now hear;
Of its own act the threads were snapt whereby
Its plaints had reached mine ear.

"'It used to ask for gifts of good,
Till came its severance self-entailed,
When sudden silence on that side ensued,
And has till now prevailed.

"'And other orbs have kept in touch;
Their voicings reach me speedily:
Thy people took upon them overmuch
In sundering them from me!

"'And it is strange—though sad enough—
Earth's race should think that one whose call
Frames, daily, shining spheres of flawless stuff
Must heed their tainted ball!

. . . . . .

"'Thou should'st have learnt that *Not to Mend*
For Me could mean but *Not to Know;*
Hence, Messengers! and straightway put an end
To what men undergo.'"

"Homing at dawn, I thought to see
One of the Messengers standing by.
—Oh, childish thought! . . . Yet oft it comes to me,
When trouble hovers nigh."

There is, possibly, a faint ray of hope in the closing lines of this unflattering poem, but it is not such as to be sharply discordant with the prevailing mood of Mr. Hardy's volume. He writes verse, as he writes prose, like no one else, and those who do not enjoy his thinking will hardly enjoy his singing. His strong lines have small disposition to trip upon the tongue, but such a piece as "The Ruined Maid" haunts the ear with its crazy lilt, while it pierces the heart with a meaning all too sane.

Pall Mall Gazette,

REVIEWS.

DE PROFUNDIS.*

One feels a profound disinclination to criticise these poems by Mr. Hardy from the point of view of verse. The unhappiness of mind they express is so poignant, the despair so sincere and so bitter, that to talk of rhymes and metres in connection with them seems trifling. It is as though one heard a human groan of pain, and proceeded to acquire its note on the piano. Again, Mr. Hardy is a fine master of creative fiction in prose, and it seems ungracious to point out, as an honest critic is bound to do, that he is by no means a master of verse. Still, poems must be criticised as poems; and since the manner of them must be noticed, it is better to notice that at once and get it out of the way before coming to the matter, which in this case is of infinitely greater interest. It has been stated somewhere or other that Mr. Hardy attaches more importance to these poems than to most of his work in prose fiction. That (if true) probably refers to the more direct statement of a theory of life than can appear in a novel. But it would not be surprising to learn that Mr. Hardy preferred his verse as verse to his prose as prose. There are many instances of men who could do one thing very well preferring their accomplishment of another they could do but ill. For the last word must be honestly applied to most of these poems as mere verse. They are rugged, almost amateurish, to a surprising degree. Some of them read like pieces of prose turned forcibly into rhyme, and for the sake of rhyme deprived of all grace and proper lucidity. There is a precedent for such a manner of verse, to be sure: to name it would be to start an idle controversy. But the present writer is bound to record his opinion that such verse (whatever the quality of the thought) is bad verse. There are exceptions. "To an Unborn Pauper Child" has its beautiful sadness and beautiful tenderness spoiled by no jar of bald workmanship. But, as a rule, the expression lags so far behind the thought that the thought inevitably loses its right force. This can be easily tested by Mr. Hardy's translations. No one can suppose that he does not feel the perfect expression, in Catullus's poem to Sirmio, of rest in weariness—*desideratoque acquiescimus lecto*; but his own, "We press the kindly couch at last," has simply nothing of it. It is fair, then, to suppose that his own thought (like this feeling of Catullus) does not appear in all its strength in his verse.

This thought is mainly a profound pessimism, in the true sense of the word. It is not merely that Mr. Hardy perceives the unhappiness of certain lives, but that he seems to take the sum of pain in the world as far outbalancing the pleasure. In "The Mother Mourns" and in "The Lacking Sense," and in "The Bullfinches" this pessimism is expressed by the metaphor that Nature is blind. In "God-Forgotten" and "The Bedridden Peasant" we are told that God, having created the world, forgot all about it; in "By the Earth's Corpse" that He regretted having made it. This, of course, is poetry, not theology, but the pessimism is past disputing. It is a common, and very insular, fashion to treat pessimism as a sort of crime. On the contrary, to remind an unthinking and materialistic generation like our own that it is possible for a man of great acknowledged powers to see little but misery in the world is to do it a great service. It would be a misfortune if every one agreed with the view, but it is very well that a gross and rather fatuous society should be told of it. In "Memory and I" Mr. Hardy gives this general pessimism a personal, if dramatic, significance which is unspeakably sad. Generally in his dramatic pieces, as "The Widow" and "The Tree"—the latter a very grim and well-told tale—and in "The Church-Builder," the sadness, or tragedy, is human and suggestive; in "The Supplanter" it seems as though Mr. Hardy had gone out of his way to heap misery on misery, and the result seems rather meaningless. Sometimes, but very seldom, he writes *leviore plectro*, as in "The Levelled Churchyard," which is humorous and amusing, though, to be sure, in the grimmest way. It is perhaps because Mr. Hardy's pessimism is so profound, so unequivocal, and therefore so impressive, that the inadequacy of his medium as he uses it so greatly disappoints a reader. Probably his verse, as verse, is as good as most of that current. Only since it is impossible to call a poet with such strength of thought and feeling a "minor" poet, or to look upon his poetry as "current," one cannot but desiderate the right medium, which in Mr. Hardy's case is prose. His prose might be poetry in the sense that Shelley called Plato's "Republic" poetry; but metre and rhyme are in his way. He is worth a hundred ordinary metrists and rhymers, but perhaps only once in the book—in the aforesaid "Unborn Pauper Child"—does he beat them with their own weapons.

G. S. S.

*"Poems of the Past and Present." By Thomas Hardy. (London and New York: Harpers).

Literature Dec 28-1901.

Mr. Hardy's new volume of verse—POEMS OF THE PAST AND PRESENT they are called (Harpers, 6s.)—is in many ways a remarkable book. It is the work of a poet at heart, but of a poet who has not yet obtained complete mastery of the method he would employ. Now and again, as if by accident, metre and rhythm and the choice of words seem to flow naturally, and the result is very nearly a flawless poem; at other times we are confronted with lapses from the true rhythm, with strange and uncouth words, with curiously clumsy turns of expression. Mr. Hardy's lines come with difficulty; they have the air of being rough-hewn; but they are tense because the writer has something to say, and something that demanded to be said in verse. The ideas are those of a poet. They force their way into poetical expression, and occasionally emerge from the struggle in rather a battered condition, but they are always recognizable. War poems in all kinds we have had frequently enough lately, but "The Going of the Battery" will outlast the most of them. It has verses in it that are worth any amount of patriotic jingle in Cockney dialect:— . . . . . .

Anthologies will include that poem (we have seen it in one already) if only for the sake of that single verse. But Mr. Hardy has a wide range, and writes in many moods or again he writes a little poem breathing the weirdly melancholy spirit of Heine, as in "The Dream-Follower":—

A Dream of mine flew over the mead
To the halls where my old Love reigns;
And it drew me on to follow its lead:
And I stood at her window-panes.

SATURDAY REVIEW, Jan 11 1902

REVIEWS.

OUT OF THE DEEP.

"Poems of the Past and the Present." By Thomas Hardy. London: Harper. 1901. 6s.

ALMOST every poem in this book has something to say, which it says in a slow, twisted, sometimes enigmatic manner, without obvious charm, but with some arresting quality, not easy to define or to estimate. It is a grey book, with its "sad-coloured landscape", its outlook on the race at Portland Bill, "that engulphing, ghast, sinister place", and on "puzzled phantoms", questioning

> "What of logic or of truth appears
> In tacking 'Anno Domini' to the years".

The best poems in it are brooding, obscure, tremulous, half-inarticulate meditations over man, nature, and destiny. Nature, "working by touch alone", and Fate, who sees and cannot feel, talk in whispers.

> "Unlightened, curious, meek,
> She broods in sad surmise . . .
> —Some say they have heard her sighs
> On Alpine height or Polar peak
> When the night tempests rise."

In "The Lacking Sense", a poem written in a kind of Mrs. Browning metre, but with a tight grip on a difficult substance, we see Nature working in the dark, "wounding where she loves", because she is blind, asking man's forgiveness and his help:

> "Assist her where thy creaturely dependence
> gives thee room,
> For thou art of her womb."

In "The Mother Mourns," a strange, dreary, ironical song of science, Nature laments that her best achievement, man, has become discontented with her in his ungrateful discontent with himself. It is like the whimpering of a hurt animal, and the queer, ingenious metre, with its one rhyme set at wide but distinct and heavily recurrent intervals, beats on the ear like a knell. Blind and dumb forces speak, conjecture, half awakening out of sleep, turning back heavily to sleep again. Many poets have been sorry for man, angry with Nature on man's behalf. Here is a poet who is sorry for Nature, who feels the earth and its roots, as if he had sap in his veins instead of blood, and could get closer than any other man to the things of the earth.

Who else could have written this crabbed, subtle, strangely impressive poem?

AN AUGUST MIDNIGHT.

> "A shaded lamp and a waving blind,
> And the beat of a clock from a distant floor:
> On this scene enter—winged, horned, and spined—
> A longlegs, a moth, and a dumbledore;
> While 'mid my page there idly stands
> A sleepy fly, that rubs its hands. . . .
>
> Thus meet we five, in this still place,
> At this point of time, at this point in space.
> —My guests parade my new-penned ink,
> Or bang at the lamp-glass, whirl, and sink.
> 'God's humblest, they!' I muse. Yet why?
> They know Earth-secrets that know not I."

No such drama has been written in verse since Browning, and the people of the drama are condensed to an even more pregnant utterance than "Adam, Lilith, and Eve". It has an atmosphere not easily to be found outside this book, a mysterious, almost terrifying atmosphere, which we shall find again in the phantom love-poems, the phantom war-poems, and such reflective poems as "A Wasted Illness", with its

> "vaults of pain,
> Enribbed and wrought with groins of ghastliness,
> . . . . . .
> And hammerings,
> And quakes, and shoots, and stifling hotness, blent
> With webby waxing things and waning things,
> As on I went".

Abstract thought takes form in some given symbol, as in "The Church-Builder", with its architectural imagery, its deliberate building up of spiritual horror. Nearly the whole book shivers with winter.

> "The ancient pulse of germ and birth
> Was shrunken hard and dry,
> And every spirit upon earth
> Seemed fervourless as I,"

the author tells us, in a poem, "The Darkling Thrush", which is a kind of personal parable.

> "We are too old in apathy",

he says elsewhere, in a farewell to love, and, in the second of the "De Profundis" poems, turns to himself, as to "one born out of due time, who has no calling here":

> "Let him to whose ears the low-voiced Best seems
> stilled by the clash of the First,
> Who holds that if way to the Better there be, it exacts
> a full look at the Worst,
> Who feels that delight is a delicate growth cramped
> by crookedness, custom, and fear,
> Get him up and be gone as one shaped awry; he
> disturbs the order here."

It is this melancholy sincerity that gives much of its quality to a book otherwise of very varying merit. Mr. Hardy has never written with flowing rhythms, either in prose or in verse, and his verse often halts, or dances in hobnails. But he has studied the technique of verse more carefully than most of his critics seem to be aware, and he has a command of very difficult metres which, if it were unvarying, would be really remarkable. But his command of his material is uncertain, and he will often spoil a fine poem by a single poor line, as the second "De Profundis" is spoilt by this line:

> "And my eyes have not the vision in them to discern
> demonstration so clear."

He crowds syllables together inharmoniously, so that we find, in a single stanza, "watch'dst", "gleam'dst", "brav'dst", each impossible to be spoken. He is always experimenting in metrical effects, and he has made some perfectly successful experiments of a very unusual kind; but he is too fond of long lines, in which the cadence gets lost by the way, especially when they are set side by side with short lines. He can sometimes write gaily and trippingly, as in the delightfully naughty jingle of "The Ruined Maid", which Congreve could not have done better. And he can be gravely and severely terse in short lines, as in the first "De Profundis"; he can be weighty and measured in a metre of his own, as in the fine, somewhat Wordsworthian address "To an unborn Pauper Child". Neither in verse nor in prose is Mr. Hardy a master of style. Both in prose and in verse he has intensely interesting things to say, and he can say them in an intensely personal way. He can always force words to say exactly what he wants them to say. But their subjection is never quite willing, they seem to have a spite against him because he is stronger than they. That is why they have never given up to him all their souls along with all their service. Some of their magic remains over: his verse does not sing. But so far as it is possible to be a poet without having a singing voice, Mr. Hardy is a poet, and a profoundly interesting one.

THE DIAL (CHICAGO) May 1 - 1902

RECENT POETRY.*

When Mr. Thomas Hardy, a year or two ago, published a small volume of poems, no little surprise was felt that he should have concealed so long and so successfully the undeniable talent which was then revealed. For the volume had an arresting quality that few collections of poems possess, and an incisive way of laying bare the very heart of life that suggested the craft of the great masters. On the other hand, it was clearly the work of a man who cared little for technique, who was willing to ride roughshod over most of the canons of verse-rhetoric, and to whom the best will in the world could not attribute the gift of the singing voice. The recent appearance of Mr. Hardy's second and larger volume, entitled "Poems of the Past and the Present," justifies, with some slight modifications, these conclusions based upon the earlier collection, and at the same time deepens our respect for the intellect which is here at work. For it is as an intellectual force that this volume must be measured, if anything like justice is to be done it. Every one of these poems has something to say, and usually it is something so well worth saying that defects in the manner of the expression may fairly be overlooked. Mr. Hardy has an abundance of ideas; many of them are poetical ideas in the strictest sense, and all of them are ideas of the sort that come only to the man who has meditated deeply upon the most serious problems of human existence. An illustration may be introduced at this point of the discussion. From the Psalmist to the philosopher of Königsberg, the insignificance of earth and all the works of man when contrasted with the vastness of the creation has been a theme to provoke perplexed questionings and inspire an awful solemnity of soul. It is so big a theme that the small poet who ventures upon it is bound to be luckless, for the best he can offer will be but a weak solution of the idea. Yet Mr. Hardy can take so old an idea as this, and give it a restatement that is deeply impressive. The sonnet written "At a Lunar Eclipse" will, we believe, bear out this assertion.

> "Thy Shadow, Earth, from Pole to Central Sea,
> Now steals along upon the Moon's meek shine
> In even monochrome and curving line
> Of imperturbable serenity.
>
> "How shall I link such sun-cast symmetry
> With the torn troubled form I know as thine,
> That profile, placid as a brow divine,
> With continents of moil and misery?
>
> "And can immense Mortality but throw
> So small a shade, and Heaven's high human scheme
> Be hemmed within the coasts you are implies?
>
> "Is such the stellar gauge of earthly show,
> Nation at war with nation, Brains that teem,
> Heroes, and women fairer than the skies?"

Mr. Hardy is much preoccupied with the vanishing faiths of the past, and looks back with a certain wistfulness to the time when men could find consolation in what the clear intelligence of to-day must look upon as myth and baseless legend.

> "In days when men had joy of war,
> A God of Battles sped each mortal jar:
> The peoples pledged him heart and hand,
> From Israel's land to isles afar."
>
> "I said to Love,
> 'It is not now as in old days
> When men adored thee and thy ways
> All else above;
> Named thee the Boy, the Bright, the One
> Who spread a heaven beneath the sun,'
> I said to Love."

Mars and Eros are now no more, and with them the other gods have taken flight. One thinks of Schiller's plaint upon the same theme.

. . . . . .

The spirit of the poet's own relentless motto,

> "Let there be truth at last,
> Even if despair,"

urges his thought implacably to the absolute pessimism of such a poem as "His Immortality," or of such a stanza as this concluding one of "De Profundis":

> "Black is night's cope;
> But death will not appal
> One who, past doubtings all,
> Waits in unhope."

Meanwhile, allowing the question of the future to be just barely debatable, the present is clearly out of joint. The group of war-poems, one of which has just been quoted, makes the poet's opinion clear enough, and it is still further enforced by a revery at Lausanne, in which the spirit of the historian to whom the place is consecrated puts these questions:

> "'How fares the Truth now? — Ill?
> — Do pens but slily further her advance?
> May one not speed her but in phrase askance?
> Do scribes aver the Comic to be Reverend still?
>
> "'Still rule those minds on earth
> At whom sage Milton's wormwood words were hurled:
> "*Truth like a bastard comes into the world*
> *Never without ill-fame to him who gives her birth*"?'"

In all the rhetorical armory of Mr. Hardy irony is the weapon most frequently and effectively used. In this volume examples are not far to seek, and they vary from what is unrelieved tragedy to what is merely pathos tinged with melancholy. Our example shall be of the less poignant sort, taken from the poem on the Pyramid of Cestius.

> "Who, then, was Cestius,
> And what is he to me?—
> Amid thick thoughts and memories multitudinous
> One thought alone brings he.
>
> "I can recall no word
> Of anything he did;
> For me he is a man who died and was interred
> To leave a pyramid,
>
> "Whose purpose was unpenetrated
> Not with its first design,
> Nor till, far down in time, beside it found their rest
> Two countrymen of mine."

Taken as a whole, this volume of Mr. Hardy's poems makes an important contribution to our literature. This is due to its thought rather than to its expression, to its weight rather than to its grace, for the author is weighty even when he essays the triolet and the villanelle. The dates attached to some of these poems indicate that the author has been writing verse for many years past, and that his new departure is in their publication, not in their composition.

*POEMS OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENT. By Thomas Hardy. New York: Harper & Brothers.

A Dream of mine flew over the mead
To the halls where my old Love reigns;
And it drew me on to follow its lead:
And I stood at her window-panes.

The Speaker, Dec 21, 1901

AFTERTHOUGHTS IN VERSE.

POEMS OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENT. By Thomas Hardy. Harpers, 1902. 6s.

MR. THOMAS HARDY is a writer eminently poetical. Not that his idiom is poetical prose, or the mould of his ideas the prose-poem, whatever that may be; but as a novelist he has perpetually revealed qualities—control of the springs of pity, for example, which is half of tragedy; power to harmonise aspects of the inanimate with the moods of men; power to represent thought and feeling by sensuous images—that are still often attributed to poetry in particular, no doubt because prose in most languages is far the younger vehicle of imaginative writing. Mr. Hardy is poetical; that is to say, he is not quite a poet, though the two have long been vulgarly confounded, at least ever since the Romantics (posing as discoverers) showed the world that poetry does not consist simply in the order of syllables and a starched and starving vocabulary. There is a definition of poetry which was probably the first to occur to every one of us, but which I am afraid will carry at this date an air of eccentricity with it. It is this: poetry is very excellent verse. The unanswerable thing, as it seems to me, in favour of this definition is that it excludes all but poets from any share in poetry. It fixes a gulf between the real poets—men who express themselves, at their very best, in recurring cadences—and others whom we are free to call poets in a figurative sense, as we call birds songsters and detectives artists.

The first section is a batch of "War Poems," many of which have appeared in the last two years in newspapers or periodicals. The pity of being buried in a far land, the suspense of soldiers' wives, the vanity of glory, are the foundation of these unequal compositions. Mr. Hardy's point of view is summarily indicated in "The Sick God":

> "Let men rejoice, let men deplore,
> The lurid Deity of heretofore
> Succumbs to one of saner nod;
> The Battle-god is god no more."

The third line is sanguine; the fourth line is true. Mars is enslaved to Plutus. I could almost wish Mr. Hardy, who surely does not hate the roll of a drum in itself, had found something to say for the deity who, at his best, as when a war is waged for freedom or for honour against odds or equals, might still command respect. There is such a thing as the romance of war—of some wars—and Mr. Hardy, I find, can appreciate it, and in "The Bridge of Lodi," among the "Poems of Pilgrimage," almost laments that it fades so readily from human memory:

> "Not a creature cares in Lodi
> How Napoleon swept each arch,
> Or where up and downward trod he,
> Or for his memorial March!"

There are also some translations. I have seen Hugo's two strophes, "Enfant, si j'étais roi, je donnerais l'empire" (from *Les Feuilles d' Automne*, I believe), translated by others, but less well than by Mr. Hardy; and he has made a pretty paraphrase of Catullus's invocation to Sirmio, at least the middle lines. He breaks off before the end, and I wonder if he would have matched "ridete, quid quid est domi cachinnorum." The last thing in the book is a sort of confession of doubt:

> "Haply Thy ancient automatic ways
> Thy ripening rule transcends;
> That listless effort tends
> To grow percipient with advance of days,
> And with percipience mends."

It is a divine evolution. Earlier in the volume, in the second part of "De Profundis," the author answers the Panglosses of his time with a pessimism that does not admit of retort:

> "And nothing is much the matter; there are many smiles to a tear;
> Then what is the matter is I, I say, Why should such an one be here?" . . .

Yes, this is an interesting volume in its way—the secondary self-expression of an interesting personality.

The Spectator, April 5th. 1902

THOMAS HARDY'S "POEMS OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENT."*

THIS collection does not, of course, mark Mr. Hardy's first appearance in the ranks of the poets. In 1898 he put out a volume entitled *Wessex Poems, and other Verses*, of much the same size and character as that before us. It differed, however, from the present book in that it contained thirty illustrations by the author and also a preface, which stated that some of the pieces included had previously been turned into prose and printed as such. Both had their significance. The illustrations showed force, character, and individuality; but they were obviously not the work of an artist working in his proper medium. Mr. Hardy's poems display, if not so conspicuously, the same defect. Poetry is not his proper medium. He is not at home, he does not move easily, in it. Mr. Hardy undoubtedly has genius; he is a master of fiction. And poetry is a kind of fiction. Dante, indeed, defined it as being fiction, but "fiction set to music," the music, that is, of language. Mr. Hardy is a master of fiction, but not a master of music.

Not that he has no music, for he has at times a haunting rhythm and a wild, eerie, melancholy *timbre* and ring all of his own. But either he is not certain of his effects, or else he deliberately chooses to be harsh and rough, uncouth and uncanny, and thinks that his style suits his theme. "Did you ask dulcet rhymes from me?" he would very likely say, ironically, with Walt Whitman. The reader certainly gets neither dulcet rhymes nor dulcet themes from Mr. Hardy. For in his poetry as in his prose; nay, in his poetry even more than in his prose, Mr. Hardy seems to prefer the unpleasant to the pleasant, the ugly to the fair. He is very much of what is called a realist. That is to say, he prefers the seamy to the smooth side of life, and appears to think that it is necessarily the more real, or, at any rate, the more important. Life, he holds, is a poor business at best. The one consolation is that it will not last, things will be all the same a hundred years hence, for we, at any rate, shall be dead, buried, and done for. He has many fine and original ideas and much sombre strength. But he has a morbid taste for the ghastly and the gruesome. This appeared in the illustrations as well as in the poems themselves in his first volume. He is specially attracted by the charnel-house. He cannot picture a wedding in a village church without laying bare the crypt and the graveyard and imagining the bride a corpse and the bridegroom a skeleton. Tennyson knew this mood. His wild song in the "Vision of Sin," while much more artistic, leaves Mr. Hardy far behind in his own vein. He, too, could "hob and nob with brother Death":—

> "Death is king and Vivat Rex!
> Tread a measure on the stones.
> Madam—if I know your sex
> From the fashion of your bones."

So he sings. But this is not Tennyson's prevailing note. It was perhaps frequent with him in his youth. But he soon outgrew it, just as Scott outgrew the German horrors of Bürger's "Lenore." Shakespeare, too, of course, knew the mood, as he knew every mood, and has rendered it with surpassing force in the well-known grave-digger's scene in *Hamlet*; but with him it is one of a thousand moods, and to dwell on it overmuch he makes a sign of madness. Poor Lamb, like so many of earth's wittiest and most humorous spirits, a "man of humorous-melancholy mark," had much to make him melancholy. But his writing is full of healthy sanity. In one of his most characteristic pieces, his lines on a young girl lately taken from the living, the sprightly Quakeress "Hester," he says:—

> "A month or more hath she been dead,
> Yet can I not by force be led
> To think upon the wormy bed
> And her together."

Mr. Hardy needs no forcing, he is always thinking of the "wormy bed." He cannot describe a charming maid or happy wife without the "wormy bed" rising in his mind.

But indeed, apart from this, he describes too seldom either charming maid or happy wife. "God-Forgotten," "The Bedridden Peasant," "To an Unknowing God," "The Ruined Maid," "Tess's Lament," "The Tree" (or an old man's story of how his love revealed to him that she had agreed with a previous lover that she would marry him if he murdered his wife, but unfortunately "he wived the gibbet-tree"), "The Church-Builder," who lavishes his all on building a church, and then becomes bankrupt and hangs himself on the rood,—these are typical names and themes of his vein. It must be admitted that the war seems to have stirred him to a nobler spirit, to a kind of grim resolve, if not to any enthusiasm. One of the best and most powerful pieces is that called the "Souls of the Slain," where he imagines himself standing on Portland Bill and seeing the ghosts of those who had died in South Africa flit home to England to find their reward or disappointment, not in their own fame or shame, but in the love or coldness of their nearest and dearest.

The death of the great and good Queen, again, moves him to something like a generous flush of loyalty, though strangely expressed. What are we to say of lines like these:—

> "Let one be born and throned whose mould shall constitute
> The norm of every royal-reckoned attribute"?

Are they graceful poetry or odd prose? The pieces called "A Man" and "At the Pyramid of Cestius" are also really fine in idea. But the one thing that really seems to lift Mr. Hardy out of himself and inspire him is the sight of the starry heavens. One of the most touching pieces in this book is that on the "Comet at Yalbury, or Yellham," one of the finest that on a "Lunar Eclipse":—

> "Thy shadow, Earth, from Pole to Central Sea,
> Now steals along upon the Moon's meek shine
> In even monochrome and curving line
> Of imperturbable serenity.
>
> How shall I link such sun-cast symmetry
> With the torn, troubled form I know as thine.
> That profile, placid as a brow divine
> With continents of moil and misery?
>
> And can immense Mortality but throw
> So small a shade, and Heaven's high human scheme
> Be bemmed within the coasts you [illegible] are implies?
> Is such the stellar gauge of earthly show,
> Nation at war with nation, Brains that teem,
> Heroes, and women fairer than the skies?"

That is fine; a fine thought and forcibly expressed. And yet it is barely poetry. The fact is, as we said at the beginning, Mr. Hardy is barely a poet. His verse has many of the qualities of poetry, such as are often found in what Dryden called "the other harmony of prose." He has a wonderful, almost too great, command of vocabulary. His diction bristles with rare words, but, if far-fetched and bizarre, they will always be found to be the words of a scholar, and of good pedigree. He occasionally strikes out a really poetic phrase of his own, such as the "mothy curfew tide." He can describe in verse as in prose the Wessex scenery, the misty water-meadows in lush Dorsetshire vales, the crisp turf on the bare Wiltshire downs; but he does it best as a prose poet. And there is less of real poetry in this volume than in the last. There is no tale so moving as the "Dance at the Phœnix," no country song so good as "Friends Beyond," with its true rustic echo.

And even when Mr. Hardy is good he is liable to be coarse, and in one piece in this collection permits himself a Swiftian turn such as was pardonable, or at least not surprising, in Swift two centuries ago, but which we do not expect, and which ought not to be sprung upon us in a book by an English writer of repute in the twentieth century. At the end of the volume are some "Imitations," as Mr. Hardy calls them, of Sappho and Catullus, Schiller and Heine, and Victor Hugo. They are not very close, but are interesting as exhibiting Mr. Hardy as an accomplished scholar, and that not only in English.

* Poems of the Past and the Present. By Thomas Hardy. London: Harper and Brothers. [6s.]

Yorkshire Daily Observer,

THE POETRY OF THOMAS HARDY.

Mr. J. C. Powys lectured at the Bradford Church Institute last night, under the auspices of the Bradford Philosophical Society, on "The Poetry of Thomas Hardy." Dr. Goyder presided. There was a large audience. The lecturer referred in his opening observations to the pessimistic standpoint taken by Hardy in many of his writings. He had done more, said the lecturer, than express a negatively despairing view of life; he had by a strange freak or caprice been able to see the sinister and grotesque view of life in a way hidden from many pessimists. There was something grand and dignified, if there was little consolation, in this scientific view. In his poems Mr. Hardy saw life from the point of view of form rather than of colour. He saw men and women, trees, plants, and animals, and the very shapes and forms of the hills and rocks silhouetted against the pale sky. The lecturer at this point read the poem entitled, "A Meeting with Despair," to illustrate his criticisms. In his poems as well as in his fables, said the lecturer, Hardy was not only concerned with magnificent descriptions of nature. He was also a master of human passions. A great pity filled him; he was unable to be happy while there was one starving man or woman in the world. He had a pity not only for men and women, but even for animals and trees. He saw that nature was not always bland and benign. He spoke in his poems of the way in which one tree would wrestle with another, and the way in which ivy would draw the sap and the life from a tree until it crumbled and fell, dragging down with it the weed that had sucked out its life. Speaking of Hardy's poetic merit, the lecturer said that he used largely words of Latin origin. There were two elements present, Scandinavian truth and Latin exactness. Hardy's words were, he said, as hard with consonants as Tennyson's were soft with vowels. But it must be remembered that iron made the best tonic. In his austere style, Mr. Hardy was only following Milton, who used metallic words. Hardy was, par excellence, the champion of women, all women, under all circumstances. His greatest novel, "Tess of the D'Urbevilles," was the defence of a woman. His poems took up the same theme. Right or wrong, saint or sinner, the story was the same; he loved them for themselves, and had a tender sympathy for them which was in literature one of the rarest things.

24 Daily Chronicle ?

THE POET OF WESSEX.

"Poems of the Past and the Present." By Thomas Hardy. (London: Harper and Brothers. 6s.)

Our current literary classifications afford no pigeon-hole for Mr. Hardy as a poet. That he is a poet, and a great one, no reader of his prose can doubt. There have been one or two masters of prose of whom it might be said that they ceased to be poets only when they began to write verse. But this is not Mr. Hardy's case. He remains a poet even in his poems; but their mechanism is so odd, and at times so disconcerting, that it is very hard to find a place for them in the recognised orders of poetry. This is only to say, after all, that his work has a very marked individuality; yet it cannot be denied that there goes to the making of that individuality an air of helplessness, a sort of fumbling after expression, in brief, an incompleteness of accomplishment, that is seldom to be found in work of such high inherent merit. Mr. Hardy is not, like Walt Whitman, an open scorner and profaner of traditional poetic form. He invents stanzas for himself of considerable difficulty; and in this book he even makes some experiments in complex French rhyme-schemes, such as the triolet. But it can seldom be said that he wears the fetters of verse with grace and ease. His words do not seem to flow in a white heat of fusion into their metrical moulds, but produce rather the effect of a laboriously-assorted mosaic in which the pieces do not always quite accurately fit.

All this by way of definition, not of detraction. There is no living poet whose work awakens a keener interest than Mr. Hardy's among readers who care more for reach and grasp of thought than for elegance of surface polish. One approaches a new collection of his verses with the certainty of carrying away from it something, and probably many things, that will linger in the memory, haunt the imagination, and become, so to speak, a familiar part of one's mental furniture. In the case of the present volume, this expectation is amply fulfilled. The "War Poems" and "Poems of Pilgrimage," though they contain many notable passages, are not, to our thinking, in Mr. Hardy's best vein; but there is scarcely one of the "Miscellaneous Poems" (forming the bulk of the book), that is not an utterance of great philosophic power or dramatic intensity. Mr. Hardy is a pessimist poet, and one of the greatest of the tribe. Readers who shy at the very word "pessimism" had best leave his poems alone—and his prose too, for that matter. But those who, without being sworn of the sect of the pessimists, hold that "the road to a true philosophy of life seems to lie in humbly recording diverse readings of its phenomena as they are forced upon us by chance and change," will find, not depression, but rather stimulation, in the musings of Mr. Hardy's sombre but always sincere and manly spirit. The keynote of his philosophy sounds clearly forth in this noble sonnet:—

THE SLEEP-WORKER.

When wilt thou wake, O Mother, wake and see—
As one who, held in trance, has laboured long,
By automatic prepossession strong—
The coils that thou has wrought unwittingly;
Wherein have place, unrealised by thee,
Fair growths, foul cankers, right enmeshed with wrong,
Strange orchestras of victim-shriek and song,
And curious blends of ache and ecstasy?
Should that morn come, and show thy opened eyes
All that Life's palpitating tissues feel,
How wilt thou bear thyself in thy surprise?—
Wilt thou destroy, in one wild shock of shame,
Thy whole high heaving firmamental frame,
Or patiently adjust, amend and heal?

The blindness of Nature is the ever-recurring burden of Mr. Hardy's thought. He postulates it definitely in the poem entitled "The Lacking Sense," from which we quote these two stanzas:—

Ah! know'st thou not her secret yet, her vainly veiled deficience,
Whence it comes that all unwittingly she wounds the lives she loves?
That sightless are those orbs of hers?—which bar to her omniscience
Brings those fearful unfulfilments, that red ravage through her zones,
Whereat all creation groans.

She whispers it in each pathetic strenuous slow endeavour,
When in mothering she unwittingly sets wounds on what she loves;
Yet her primal doom pursues her, faultful, fatal, is she ever;
Though so deft and nigh to vision is her facile finger-touch
That the seers marvel much.

Beside this figure of blind Nature, in Mr. Hardy's mythology, stands the companion figure of Destiny, unpitying because insentient. A dialogue between the two is set forth in a remarkable poem, entitled "Doom and She." The same strain of thought runs through "The Mourning Mother," "I said to Love," and "By the Earth's Corpse." Mr. Hardy's nearest approach to optimism is to be found in the last poem in the book, addressed to "Ἀγνώστῳ Θεῷ." ("To the Unknown God.") We quote the last three stanzas:—

How much of consciousness informs Thy will,
Thy biddings, as if blind,
Of death-inducing kind,
Nought shows to us ephemeral ones who fill
But moments in Thy mind.

Haply Thy ancient automatic ways
Thy ripening rule transcends;
That listless effort tends
To grow percipient with advance of days,
And with percipience mends.

For, in unwonted purlieus, far and nigh,
At whiles or short or long,
May be discerned a wrong
Dying as of self-slaughter; whereat I
Do raise my voice in song.

It cannot be said that Mr. Hardy finds frequent occasion to raise his voice in song over the suicide of one of the ills of life. Indeed we do not know that any one of the poems in the book before us can be clearly traced to this source of inspiration.

The dramatic, as distinct from the philosophical, poems once more bear witness to the extraordinary wealth of material at Mr. Hardy's command. Many of them contain whole novels in germ—for instance, "The Dame of Athelhall," "A Man," "The Tree," "The Church Builder," and "The Supplanter." "The Last Pyx" is a quaint and beautiful ballad, and "Tess's Lament" will be read with pleasure by all admirers of that most pathetic creation. It would be tedious, however, to catalogue all the memorable poems in a book of whose ninety and odd numbers scarcely one is quite insignificant. One last specimen of Mr. Hardy's characteristic irony, and we have done:—

MAD JUDY.

When the hamlet hailed a birth
Judy used to cry:
When she heard our christening mirth
She would kneel and sigh.
She was crazed, we knew, and we
Humoured her aberrancy.

When the daughters and the sons
Gathered them to wed,
And we like-intending ones
Danced till dawn was red,
She would rock and mutter, "More
Comers to this stony shore!"

When old Headsman Death laid hands
On a babe or twain,
She would feast, and by her brands
Sing her songs again.
What she liked we let her do,
Judy was insane, we knew.

Pilot. Feb 27th 1904

MR. HARDY'S LYRICS.

The recent discussion upon Mr. Thomas Hardy's drama of "The Dynasts" may, perhaps, be allowed to create an occasion for some remarks on the two volumes of lyrics, "Wessex Poems" and "Poems of the Past and Present," which form the concluding volumes of the collected edition of his works; especially as to their prevailing tone, which is the reverse of optimistic. In the poem called "De Profundis," speaking of the sombre colours in which he views human life, Mr. Hardy puts forward the plea that he is one,

Who holds that if way to the Better there be,
It exacts a full look at the Worst,

and such a claim is entirely justifiable. "Optimism," as Dr. Caird well says, "must be reached, not by the exclusion, but by the exhaustion of Pessimism." But Mr. Hardy's apology does not cover the actual attitude to life displayed in these poems. He is not the only modern writer who has allowed a turn for the ironic view of things to gain such a mastery over him that he has grown almost incapable of seeing anything in life except the worst. We may take an obvious example or two where the whole case is within the purview of everybody. It might have been expected, if not anticipated, that Mr. Hardy, as a professed lover of truth, would have welcomed the movement in the Christian Church to follow in matters of criticism whither the argument leads; and that if he chose to refer to the subject at all he would have done so sympathetically. But his interest in the matter takes the form of a disagreeable sneer put into the mouth of some "respectable burgher," who is much too witty to have had any existence outside Mr. Hardy's imagination. After rehearsing some supposed conclusions of "the higher criticism," the respectable burgher resolves as follows:—

Since thus they hint, nor turn a hair,
All churchgoing will I forswear,
And sit on Sundays in my chair,
And read that moderate man Voltaire.

Mr. Hardy's burgher has an indisputable right to prefer Voltaire to Dr. Driver for his Sunday reading, if he chooses, only Mr. Hardy must not be surprised if Churchmen conclude that the indisposition to see any good side in their efforts after the truth is of a piece with his inability to see a good side to other things even more important. Again, one might have surmised that Mr. Hardy, whose sentiments are not in the main "other-worldly," would have had some sympathy with those persons who think that ancient churchyards, which are not of much service to the dead, might be made useful and pleasurable to the living, by converting them into gardens. But no; a chance arises of a flout at the arch-enemy clericalism, and so we get "The Levelled Churchyard":—

We late-lamented, resting here,
Are mixed to human jam,
And each to each exclaims in fear,
"I know not which I am."
* * *
From restorations of Thy fane,
From smoothings of Thy sward,
From zealous Churchmen's pick and plane
Deliver us, O Lord. Amen.

Instances of this sort are enough to show that Mr. Hardy need not be accepted as a true prophet, simply on the ground that he does not prophesy smooth things. The great prophets of the world have always been men who, while they could see evil enough in what passed as good, could also see good where it existed, sometimes in what ordinarily passed as evil. A reader of these volumes might be excused if he set down Mr. Hardy as constitutionally indisposed to seeing good anywhere; but the truth rather is that, as so often happens with persons who are poets but not great poets, the sight of the good does not arouse the emotion which supplies the creative impulse. A recognition that human intentions are not wholly vile may be discovered in the poem called "A Commonplace Day," but it is introduced only to suggest that on the particular day in question such good impulses came to nothing.

Wanly upon the panes
The rain slides as have slid since morn my colourless thoughts; and yet
Here, while Day's presence wanes,
And over him the sepulchre lid is slowly lowered and set,
He wakens my regret.

Regret—though nothing dear
That I wot of was toward in the wide world at his prime,
Or bloomed elsewhere than here,
To die with his decease, and leave a memory sweet, sublime,
Or mark him out in Time.

Yet, maybe, in some soul,
In some spot undiscerned on sea or land, *some impulse rose,*
Or some intent upstole
Of that enkindling ardency from whose maturer glows
The world's amendment flows;

But which, benumbed at birth
By momentary chance or wile, has missed its hope to be
Embodied on the earth;
And undervoicings of this loss to man's futurity
May wake regret in me.

No one but a true poet could have written these lines; they project into memorable form as distinct and recognisable a regret as that which Tennyson expressed in his "Tears, Idle Tears." But Mr. Hardy would be a truer poet still if he would allow himself to recognise that these impulses and intents do not always "miss their hope," and that in consequence there is such a thing as moral progress. He seemed on the verge of making this discovery in the poem called "The Sick God," which takes note that the old war fury is dying out in men; "they do and dare, but tensely—pale of brow."

Souls have grown seers, and thought outbrings
The mournful many-sidedness of things
With foes as friends, enfeebling ires
And fury-fires by gaingivings!

In other words, there is a keener sense of equity in men's minds than there once was. But Mr. Hardy ignores this fact when, in a later poem, he makes the "puzzled phantom" of a solider killed in South Africa inquire—

By whom, and when the all-earth-gladdening law
Of Peace, brought in by that Man Crucified,
Was ruled to be inept and set aside,

and also when he writes the stanzas called "Mute Opinions," which affirm that the actual course of the world has followed not the predictions of the preachers, but those of the pessimists:—

When, grown a shade, beholding
That land in lifetime trode,
To learn if its unfolding
Fulfilled its *clamoured code*.
I saw, in web unbroken,
Its history outwrought
Not as the loud had spoken,
But as the mute had thought.

Perhaps Mr. Hardy hits more exactly the truth about his poetical melancholy when he speaks of himself as "the Impercipient." His pessimism is less the result of thought than of temperament. Like the melancholy Jaques, he sees for the most part only what ministers to his mood, and then "moralises the spectacle." What, for example, should we have to believe about human love if we saw the world only through Mr. Hardy's eyes? That it was universal tragedy. No one will deny that there are tragedies in love, and Mr. Hardy has written not a few of them in these pages; in "My Cicely," for instance; but the world knows that love and tragedy are not simply convertible terms. If there is truth in Mr. Hardy's "Wives in the Sere," there is more truth still in Mr. Browning's "By the Fireside" and "One Word More."

Having said so much by way of deprecation of Mr. Hardy's prejudices, it is the pleasanter task to point out how much good writing these books contain. In some of the early poems there are lines which recall the great manner of earlier writers, such as:—

And the sick grief that you were far away
Grew pleasant thankfulness that you were near.

But the later poems show the greater mastery in their handling both of metre and of vocabulary. The finest poem of the collection, in the opinion of the present writer, is that called "The Souls of the Slain," which tells how the souls of English soldiers, slain on the veldt, came trooping homeward to discover what was being said of them by their widows and kindred; and finding that they were remembered not for their valour, but for their "old homely acts," were grieved or pleased according as their record was "bitter" or "lovely and true." For the most part, however, the best writing is found in the poems which repeat the sad refrain of Ecclesiastes:—

William Dewey, Tranter Reuben, Farmer Ledlow late at plough,
Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,
And the Squire, and Lady Susan murmur mildly to me now.

* * *

"We've no wish to hear the tidings, how the people's fortunes shift;
What your daily doings are;
Who are wedded, born, divided; if your lives beat slow or swift,
Curious not the least are we if our intents you make or mar,
If you quire to our old tune,
If the City stage still passes, if the weirs still roar afar."

Even the birds' songs have the same ground-note of agnosticism.

Brother Bulleys, let us sing
From the dawn till evening!
For we know not that we go not,
When the day's pale pinions fold,
Unto those who sang of old.

H. C. BEECHING

St. James's Gazette, March 5. 04.

Canon Beeching had an interesting article last week in the "Pilot" on Mr. Thomas Hardy's lyrical verses, which seemed to me to make a true point about his genius. The gifts which have made Mr. Hardy one of the great imaginative artists of our time are his gifts of temperament and atmosphere. Mr. Hardy himself and some of his critics show a mistaken tendency to lay stress on his philosophy. But Mr. Hardy's genius is essentially that of the artist, and not that of the thinker. Others lay stress on his realism. But the Wessex of Mr. Hardy's novels is essentially Mr. Hardy's Wessex. It is, as some critics are fond of telling us all art is, Nature seen through a temperament, and a temperament exercising a very potent influence. Canon Beeching has evidently been vexed by Mr. Hardy's anti-clericalism. That, however, if a weak point, is comparatively a small point.

The Dynasts – Part First.

Daily Chronicle
Jan 13 · 1904.

MR. HARDY'S DRAMA.

"The Dynasts: a Drama of the Napoleonic Wars." In three parts, nineteen acts, and 130 scenes. By Thomas Hardy. Part First. (London: Macmillan and Co. 4s. 6d. net.)

[Published To-day.]

There is something ironic and a little defiant in the very title-page. A drama in three parts—that is to say, three volumes—and nineteen acts!

Certainly there is nothing Lilliputian about the scheme of a work like that, and our poor little earthly stage managers must turn away in despair. It is only upon the unbounded stage of the spirit that dramas on that scale can be enacted. Mr. Hardy immediately, and rather proudly, admits it in his preface. The play, he says, is intended simply for mental performance, and he thinks it possible that such performance may ultimately be the fate of all drama other than that of contemporary or frivolous life.

In any case, we have here a drama which absolutely departs from all dramatic rules in the stage limitations. In form it is more like the Second Part of "Faust" than anything else in great literature. It is a vision of the world—"a panoramic show," as the author calls it—including every condition of mankind, from kings and conquerors down to the men and women of the field, and haunted by the inexplicable spirits of universal destiny, by the mocking spirits of ironic laughter, and the sorrowful spirits of human pity. We hear these "Phantom Intelligences" murmuring and wailing over the scenes as they pass before us with the sudden transitions and rapidity of dreams, whilst the Recording Angels chant the unfolded scroll, and man struggles blindly along a troublesome course upon his little star.

But the vision does not reveal to us a series of symbolic and imaginary figures like "Faust." It is an uplifting of the veil from a few quick months of actual history, and it shows us glimpses of things that were actually happening on earth only a short century ago. It is a panorama of the contest of nations that we call the Napoleonic wars. The great Conqueror is here again. We see him pacing the sands of Boulogne and waiting in vain for the fleet that was to give him just the twenty-four hours he wanted to strike at England's heart. We see him before Ulm, receiving Mack's surrender, and again at Austerlitz, pounding the crowded ice with his guns. And there is honest George, his enemy, humbly enjoying himself at Weymouth as a man and a father, and looking forward to the games and horse-collars of an English holiday. And there is Pitt, slowly dying under his high purpose; and, again, we watch Nelson put to sea and walk the deck among the roar and crash of Trafalgar. Interspersed among these great names, we are given rapid scenes from the Wessex we know so well. The stage-coach lumbers along the Ridgeway; old men with pikes watch the beacon on Egdon Heath; and boatmen tell how the crew, for want of rum, drank off the spirits in which great Nelson's body was coming home. We listen as they sing a grand Trafalgar song, beginning:—

In the wild October night-time, when the wind raved round the land,
And the Back-sea met the Front-sea, and our doors were blocked with sand,
And we heard the drub of Deadman's Bay, where bones of thousands are,
We knew not what the day had done for us at Trafalgar,
(*All*) Had done,
Had done,
For us at Trafalgar.

Such is the stuff the dream is made of. Scene by scene, sometimes in dialogue, sometimes by actions in dumb show, we are led through the tremendous happenings of ten short months, and the volume—the first part of the drama—ends with the death of Pitt. Tremendous happenings? It requires some courage to speak like that after watching Mr. Hardy's vision. Never since Lilliput was imagined have we seen the great fortunes and crises of humanity so reduced in size. We watch the clash of armies, the glories of state, and the splendour of ambition brought down to terms of frogs and mice. It is as though we took our stand upon some star to which the sun is but a firefly, and gazed upon this tiny dust-speck of an earth in which certain microscopic atoms were exploding with almost imperceptible noise. In that tale of such peculiar beauty and sorrow called "Two on a Tower," Mr. Hardy has used the ironic contrast between the passion in two lovers' hearts, and the rushing movements and unimaginable catastrophes in that universe of stars at which, side by side, they spy through bits of glass. But here the insignificant and pitiful side of the contrast is not in the hearts of two poor lovers, but in the continents and oceans of the world, the hosts of conquerors, the doom of kings, and the crowding populations of European empires. The vision opens, and we see them spread out before us like little toys. Queer little figures run about; they love and hate, they laugh and cry, and make a fine to-do. You would swear they were real. Here creeps the white Austrian army with "a movement as of molluscs on a leaf." There Napoleon shakes his little fist. There goes Nelson with his ships, the passionate love in his heart and the penny cannon in the bow. There are the tiny villagers scrabbling up their little hill to see a real match struck upon the tinder. We hear them speak:—

First Old Man (shouldering his pike): Who goes there? Friend or foe, in the King's name?

Woman: Piece o' trumpery! "Who goes" yourself! What d'ye talk o', John Whiting? Can't your eyes earn their living any longer, then, that you don't know your own neighbours? 'Tis Private Cantle of the Locals and his wife Keziar, down at Bloom's End—who else should it be?

So they squeak in ghosts of words—all so tiny and far-off that the squeaks of villagers and emperors hardly differ in their value, and when they have said their little say, the clouds of time sweep over them all alike. They are swept away and put into their boxes, with one or two little kicks of the limbs as though the clockwork were just running down. Standing on that freezing pinnacle from which Mr. Hardy, full of the pity of mortality, full of its laughter and amazing ways, regards man's course upon the earth, we behold the world spread like a map in miniature:—

The nether sky opens, and Europe is disclosed as a prone and emaciated figure; the Alps shaping like a backbone, and the branching mountain-chains like ribs, the peninsular plateau of Spain forming a head. Broad and lengthy lowlands stretch from the north of France across Russia like a grey-green garment hemmed by the Ural Mountains and the glistening Arctic Ocean.

The point of view then sinks downwards through space, and draws near to the surface of the perturbed countries, where the peoples, distressed by events which they did not cause, are seen writhing, crawling, heaving, and vibrating in their various cities and nationalities.

Sometimes we are shown a vision more woeful, perhaps, even than that sight of the nations squirming together like maggots in a cheese. For instance, on the morning of Austerlitz we read:—

At once, as earlier, a preternatural clearness possesses the atmosphere of the battlefield, in which the scene becomes anatomised and the living masses of humanity transparent. The controlling Immanent Will appears therein, as a brain-like network of currents and ejections, twitching, interpenetrating, entangling, and thrusting hither and thither the human forms.

Of that Immanent Will we can say neither good nor evil. Probably unconscious, probably purposeless, it grinds along its way, and men and empires are but momentary manifestations in its changeful history. So with the laughter of irony and the tears of pity joined, Mr. Hardy enacts before us this puppet show of earthly greatness. He says he was driven to the theme by "the provokingly slight regard paid to English influence and action throughout the struggle by those Continental writers who had dealt imaginatively with Napoleon's career." Alas! Among the mannikins of Lilliput, why should the influence of one tiny family concern us more than another's? All are but blood-vessels and ganglions in the unthinking brain which holds the stars and the universal void.

HENRY W. NEVINSON.

Morning Post
Jan 13 · 1904.

MR. THOMAS HARDY'S PLAY.*

PUBLISHED TO-DAY.

"'The Dynasts' is a play intended simply for mental performance, and not for the stage," says Mr. Hardy in the preface to his presentation of that "Great Historical Calamity, or Clash of Peoples, artificially brought about some hundred years ago," wherein the greatest personality was Napoleon, and the virtual end of which came on that Belgian battlefield where, as we now know on very high authority, "Old Vorwärts," with some feeble help from a British Army, finally stamped out the fire that had been blown into renewed activity some hundred days before. The mere reading of the title-page naturally suggests one of those Mongolian dramas of which the performance goes on for a week without any break save the ordinary intervals between acts and scenes, and to which the spectators bring a supply of food and drink to last them until the play is over. The very words "nineteen acts, one hundred and thirty scenes," will evoke many a laugh, we are sure. But the author's justification, we hold, is complete, as far as his choice of the dramatic form is in question. That "The Dynasts" is never likely to be presented, even on an open-air stage as large as the dancing platform at the old "Mabille," [illegible]

We can but say for ourselves that we trust the reception of this first part may be sufficiently warm to assure Mr. Hardy that if the rest of the drama does not appear it will be from no lack of desire on the part of that public which can appreciate the originality and force of his courageous effort to present the greatest period of the modern history of Europe and of our own national story in the form of a drama, to be played at that theatre of which our imaginations provide the scenery and accessories and our emotions supply the orchestra. "The Dynasts" is a very notable production, and at this hour, when the nations which fought against Napoleon are, perhaps, more unrestful than at any period since the setting of "The Corsican's" star, there is much in the book to give us pause while we compare our position now under our present Government with our position then under Pitt. Even in those days we find a Recording Angel singing:

"Feeble-framed dull unresolve, unresourcefulness,
Sat in the halls of the kingdom's high Councillors,
Whence an untactical torpid despondency
Weighed as with winter the national mind."

And another Recording Angel, taking up the strain, declares that

"England stands forth to the sword of Napoléon
Nakedly—not an ally in support of her;
Men and munitions dispersed inexpediently;
Projects of range and scope poorly defined."

The triumphs of our arms by sea and land which followed that period of "torpid despondency" showed what Britain, "pulling herself together," could do. But those triumphs would be but poor excuses for the Britons of to-day if at any time "dull unresolve" and "unresourcefulness" led to national disaster against foes far less resourceful than "the scourge of Europe."

* The Dynasts: a Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. In Three Parts, Nineteen Acts, and One Hundred and Thirty Scenes. By Thomas Hardy. Part First. Macmillan and Co. 4s. 6d. net.

Daily Express
Jan 13 · 1904

HARDY THE OBSCURE.

A Strange Incursion into Drama by the Great Novelist.

In an explanatory preface Mr. Thomas Hardy tells us that "The Dynasts" (Macmillan, 4s. 6d. net), which is published to-day, is a drama "concerned with the Great Historical Calamity, or Clash of Peoples, artificially brought about some hundred years ago."

Reflection convinces the inquirer that Mr. Hardy wants to tell us he has written a play around the figure of Napoleon.

The title-page informs us that the play is to be in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes. With commendable forbearance the author has so far limited his demands on the public to the first of the three parts, containing six of the nineteen acts and thirty-five of the one hundred and thirty scenes.

The play—or may one say panorama [illegible]—is colossal, and it is with a positive sense of relief that one reads in the preface: "'The Dynasts' is a play intended simply for mental performance, and not for the stage." There are Wagner enthusiasts who would have sat through it.

As it has occurred alike to Homer and to the makers of pantomime books, a supervisory council of immortals is a useful form of mechanism for a drama. Mr. Hardy employs choruses of Spirits of the Years and the Pities. Also a Recording Angel (with semi-chorus). All are under the direction of the "Immanent Will." Of the latter, Mr. Hardy's Spirit of the Years tells us—

In that immense unweeting Mind is shown
One far above forethinking; purposive,
Yet superconscious; a Clairvoyancy
That knows not what it knows, yet works therewith.

Mr. Hardy may have his own reasons for thinking that this curious jargon is the language of the over-world. His Spirits never, if they can help it, use a word of one syllable.

Spiritual Epigrams.

To these Spirits is given the task of discussing and endeavouring to make epigrams about Napoleon through Part I., which is practically confined to 1805, with the surrender at Ulm and the battles of Trafalgar and Austerlitz.

As far as may be Mr. Hardy has clung to history, and he goes so far as to throw an actual debate in the House of Commons into blank verse, which medium likewise receives Nelson's last breath and "Kiss me, Hardy."

That is shortly after Villeneuve has despaired of ever

Helming to north in pomp of [illegible]

It will be seen that this method of expressing oneself is occasionally permitted to descend from the over-world to man.

The finale arrives after Pitt's death, when it has been demonstrated, as a Spirit puts it:

These English take to liquid life
Right patly.

By liquid life, one hastens to say, is meant the sea, and not inebriety.

Mr. Hardy tells us that the publication of Parts II. and III. is not guaranteed, and it is difficult to be very sorry that it is not. To apply Mr. Hardy's Spirits to himself:

Spirit of Pities.
But, O, the intolerable antilogy
Of making figments feel!

Spirit Ironic.
Logic's in that.
It does not, I must own, quite play the [illegible]

Daily Telegraph
Jan 13 · 1904.

By W. L. COURTNEY.

THE DYNASTS.

(MACMILLAN.)

It is, no doubt, an irrelevant and possibly also a stupid question. Nevertheless, it must be asked. Why should Mr. Thomas Hardy, with a certain colossal topic in his head, choose to write about it in a so-called dramatic form? "The Dynasts" is a "panoramic" play, of which only the first part has as yet appeared. Its ultimate dimensions are uncertain, but are quite sufficient to fill the imagination with awe and bewilderment. When Mr. Swinburne wrote some of his historical dramas, it was suggested to him that his form was a little cumbrous, and his list of dramatis personæ somewhat overpowering. But what are we to say of a drama of the Napoleonic wars—for that is what "The Dynasts" amounts to—consisting of three parts, nineteen acts, 130 scenes, and about two hundred characters? The subject, of course, is one which is always ready to the hand of any novelist or playwright. Mr. Hardy himself tells us that he was attracted to it by three considerations: First, because he knew King George's summer residence in Sussex; secondly, because Sussex itself is full of memories of the threatened Napoleonic invasion; thirdly, because Nelson's flag-captain at Trafalgar came from a village in the same countryside. Mr. Hardy's well-known novel, "The Trumpet-Major," is itself sufficient evidence of the interest which the author has taken in this historical episode. He has touched the fringes of a vast topic, and he now wants to explore the various recesses and outlying regions more closely. The choice of subject, then, is abundantly justified—if, indeed, it needed any justification. But again I ask—Why this particular form? Why does Mr. Hardy write a drama which is no drama? And why does he attempt to confuse the two adjacent, but still entirely distinct, realms of drama and panorama? For, indeed, panorama is what Mr. Hardy's "Dynasts" really comes to—a vague, amorphous, indiscriminate, gigantic sort of thing, a little grotesque, more than a little shapeless, impressive only because of its sheer bulk and the obvious earnestness of the author. Art, of course, has nothing to do with magnitude or extension; it is occupied only with choice, discretion, selectiveness. It is not the amount of ground the author covers which concerns us one jot; it is rather the precise and ordered skill with which he deals with the selected incidents.

This much, at all events, then, is clear—that Mr. Hardy's "The Dynasts" is unwieldy and top-heavy. If the author chooses to make light of the question whether a so-called literary drama is drama at all—or, rather, a perverse and wrong-headed variety—we, for our part, cannot forget that a clear method of development, a gradual heightening of the dramatic issue until the catastrophe occurs, is the essence even of the literary drama. But Mr. Hardy, in his latest work, although he deliberately chooses a particular form of writing, refuses to be bound by its limitations. It is as though a man should set himself to write a sonnet, and decline to accept the prescription which ordains for him just fourteen lines, and no more, wherein to set forth his theme. In that case we may call the poem what we like, but it is not a sonnet. And, in precisely the same way, Mr. Hardy's discursive muse, which puts six acts and about thirty-six scenes into its first division, may amble or prance or sing in any way she pleases, but she is obviously not occupied with playwriting. We are forced to assume that "The Dynasts" is really a panorama, in which one scene fades and changes into another as the historical series demands, interspersed here and there with songs and interludes, and, indeed, accompanied throughout by music. It is a literary panorama—perhaps the very first of its kind which has ever been put before an English reading public. Marlowe's "Tamburlaine the Great" was almost a panorama, but it was not only actable, but acted. Mr. Hardy's panorama is intended only for the quick, constructive intelligence, which can provide a framework for very heterogeneous material.

Of course Mr. Hardy knows very well what he is doing, however little he may be able to justify his position. For ourselves, having got rid of preliminary objections, it is all the more easy to see what there is of value and interest in the new work. One point the author himself urges. The tremendous chapter in the world's history which deals with the career of Napoleon has hitherto been discussed by Continental writers with provoking disregard for the part which England played. Yet nothing is clearer than the fact that it was England, and England almost alone, which baulked Napoleon's ambition. The "Corsican upstart" knew this very well himself. He was always conscious that as long as England remained mistress of the seas his dreams of universal empire could not be realised. He knew also that most of the combinations of foreign Powers which he had to encounter on the Continent were brought together by the untiring energies of Pitt. "The Dynasts" views the course of events entirely from this English standpoint. It opens on the great design of Napoleon to cross the Channel in his flat-bottomed boats, and, starting from Boulogne, to carry war and devastation into the English capital. Then, when Villeneuve shrinks from the mighty task of coping with Nelson, the book pictures the breaking up of the camp at Boulogne, and the departure of Napoleon himself to meet German and Russian foes at Ulm and Austerlitz. Nelson plays his part magnificently in the drama, by seeking out and destroying Villeneuve's fleet at Trafalgar, and Napoleon is once again unpleasantly reminded that the Mistress of the Ocean stands athwart his far-reaching schemes. But the French Emperor's military genius was too strong for Pitt's Continental combinations. Nelson might triumph on the sea, but the victory at Austerlitz, as we see in the closing scene of this first instalment of "The Dynasts," was a death-blow to England's great Minister.

If we take the book no longer as a portion of history, but merely for what it gives us of literary and poetic interest, there are several points worthy of consideration. Perhaps it is not surprising to find that wherever Mr. Hardy deals with his beloved Wessex he is at his best. The opening portions of the first act, the latter portions of Act II., King George's watering-place, as delineated in Acts IV. and V.—these are the things which are racy of the soil in which Mr. Hardy's genius has been nurtured. His countrymen talk like country men; his suggestions of background and mise-en-scène are exceedingly vivid and picturesque. On the other hand, he feels himself apparently so much bound to exact historical detail, so eager to reproduce the recorded words of his various personages, that the general effect is not a little bald and tame. There is, for instance, a scene in the first act in the House of Commons, where Sheridan wrangles with Pitt, and Windham and Bathurst add their quota to the discussion, finally reinforced by Fox, which is, for the most part, sheer unimaginative prose, unnaturally broken up into blank verse. Mr. Hardy is very careful to give us historic phrases, especially in reference to Nelson and Pitt. Thus we have not only the well-known signal of Trafalgar, "England expects," but the dying English commander says, "Kiss me, Hardy. I am satisfied. Thank God I have done my duty." And, just as Nelson bequeaths Lady Hamilton "to the honour" of his nation, so Pitt says: "Roll up that map, 'twill not be needed now these ten years," and gives us as his dying words, "My country! How I leave my country!" Probably no dramatist writing of this time could afford to ignore such well-known and memorable phrases. In Mr. Hardy's narrative historic veracity is not only preserved by such characteristic rhetoric, but enters with irritating fulness into the weft and woof of his dramatic scheme. Once more we are reminded of an exact and detailed panorama rather than of a work of art.

We are forgetting, however, one of the most remarkable features of this work. However literal and prosaic Mr. Hardy may think it necessary to be in the slow evolution of his historic theme, he allows himself one poetic device—the introduction of unseen and spiritual agencies supervising, directing, and controlling the plot. The Shade of the Earth, the Ancient Spirit of the Years, the Spirit of the Pities, spirits sinister and ironic, to say nothing of recording angels, intervene from time to time as ghostly witnesses and arbiters of the human drama. The effect is not always happy—sometimes it is almost puerile and perverse. Homer could lay half his epical theme amid the councils of Olympus; Milton might reveal his great human tragedy, controlled and dominated by his visions of heaven and hell, because in the one case, as in the other, we had not merely a literary artifice, but a genuine form of devotion and belief. Mr. Hardy's plan is different. These spirits and agencies are not really operative; they are, in the strictest sense of the term, witnesses of a plot with which they have nothing much to do. In a modern and agnostic world, Mr. Hardy seems to say, we must not speak of a divine author. There is no Personal Providence, there is only blind power or energy—not He, but It. As Mr. Hardy himself says, in his preface, "The abandonment of the masculine pronoun in allusions to the First or Fundamental Energy seemed a necessary and logical consequence of the long abandonment by thinkers of the anthropomorphic conception of the same." In similar fashion the oddly-named Spirit of the Pities may weep with a Virgilian sense of the tearfulness of things, but can do nothing but weep. The Spirit of the Years can only ask for a clear recognition of the inscrutable energies of the Primal Force. Such ghostly spectators must neither strive nor cry, they can but chronicle and observe. Everything in history goes on in dumb, unreasoning, irresistible fashion. We are the victims of necessity, the playthings of Fate. There is no freedom of the will. Napoleon himself is a blind and irresponsible force, carrying out some vague, chaotic purpose, of the meaning of which he is not aware. Such is Mr. Hardy's pessimistic creed. Only in this mastery of irrational materialism, this submergence of all intelligence under laws of hard and arbitrary destiny, one wonders why Mr. Hardy should have thought it necessary to bring in spirits at all. Their very name contradicts the theory which they expound. If there is nothing but matter evolving in accordance with its own laws, why drag in the spirit world? This is only one of the many difficulties which Mr. Hardy's odd dramatic scheme entails. "The Dynasts" is a curious and interesting experiment, significant enough of the severe pass to which poetry, under the dominion of science, has been brought, but with none of the elevation of the epic, or the absorbing character of psychologic drama. When Mr. Hardy forgets his creed, and gives us real human character, as he does now and again in Nelson, he is quite at his best. Take, for instance, the following passage, where Nelson is talking with Collingwood:

> I have a feeling here of dying fires,
> A sense of much and deep unwonted censure,
> Which, compassing about my private life,
> Makes all my public service lustreless
> In my own eyes. I fear I am much condemned
> For those dear Naples and Palermo days,
> And her who was the sunshine of them all!
> He who is with himself dissatisfied,
> Though all the world find satisfaction in him,
> Is like a rainbow-coloured bird gone blind,
> That gives delight it shares not. Happiness?
> It's the philosopher's stone no alchemy
> Shall light on in this world I am weary of.
> Smiling, I'd pass to my long home to-morrow
> Could I with honour, and my country's gain.

If the whole book were at this level, it would be infinitely easier to read.

Morning Leader
Jan 14 · 1904.

"THE DYNASTS."

MR. THOMAS HARDY'S NAPOLEONIC CHRONICLE.

"The Dynasts." A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. By Thomas Hardy. First Part. London: 1904. Macmillans. 4s. 6d. net.

Mr. Thomas Hardy is a man of genius, and therefore this daring experiment ought not to be lightly dismissed as an eccentric freak or whim. It is "a drama of the Napoleonic wars in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes." The first part contains six acts, and the action begins in 1805, during Napoleon's preparations for the invasion of England, and ends with Austerlitz and the death of Pitt. It is not a drama, but a dramatic chronicle—history in flashes. The reader is required to fill in the gaps between the swiftly-moving scenes, and to provide supplementary scenes of the imagination. The "panoramic show" is intended for "mental performance," and assuredly Mr. Hardy flashes on the imagination a wonderful series of historical pictures, painted with tremendous vigor, and full of dramatic life.

* *

Northern Whig
Jan. 16. 1904

It will not be possible even to attempt a final judgment on "The Dynasts" until Mr. Hardy has carried out his scheme in its entirety. It is not a work that will appeal to the multitude. It makes too great a tax upon time and thought for that. There can be no dogmatising as to how long it will live; it would even be rash to promise for it greater vitality than for Mr. Hardy's own "Far from the Madding Crowd" and his "Tess;" nevertheless, it is undoubtedly the most important contribtuion that has been made to English literature since the death of Tennyson.

Daily News
Jan 14 · 1904.

MR. HARDY'S NAPOLEONIC DRAMA.

REMARKABLE EXPERIMENT.

"The Dynasts." A Drama. By Thomas Hardy. Part First. Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.

It is related of Michael Angelo that when he saw a certain bold headland on the Italian coast he was seized with a desire to hew it into a mighty piece of statuary. We are reminded of that incident by this portentous drama with its three parts, its nineteen acts, and its hundred and thirty scenes. In it Mr. Hardy has taken a vast headland of history and shaped it into what he calls "a panoramic show." He aims, as it were, to present the history of the Napoleonic wars by flashes of lightning, which illuminate now the coast of Dorset, now the camp at Boulogne, again the field of Austerlitz or the House of Commons. Whatever may be the final judgment as to the result, its title to the qualities of boldness and originality will not be disputed. There is, so far as one can recall, nothing in the world of books similar to this heroic chronicle-piece where in turn Pitt and Sheridan flagellate each other on the floor of the House, and Nelson is seen walking and talking on the deck of the Victory, and Napoleon is heard directing his attack on General Mack at Ulm. The mechanism which makes it possible to present these kaleidoscopic transitions with an air of verisimilitude is cunningly devised. The work is called a "drama" because there is no more accurate definition to apply to it, unless, indeed, Mr. Hardy had described it frankly as a panorama. But though it is presented in dramatic form, "The Dynasts" is impossible as a stage piece, even though a week were devoted to the performance of its hundred and thirty scenes, and the whole resources of the dramatic profession were employed to fill the multitude of rôles. For the atmosphere is philosophical rather than dramatic. The human figures who have their exits and their entrances on this illimitable stage are pawns in the hand of the inscrutable Will, represented by impersonated abstractions who form a sort of Greek Chorus to the action of the drama.

It is with these spirits of the Overworld that the drama opens, and the note of Mr. Hardy's outlook is at once apparent.

SHADE OF THE EARTH.
What of the Immanent Will and Its designs?
Spirit of the Years.
It works unconsciously, as heretofore,
Eternal artistries in Circumstance,
Whose patterns, wrought by rapt æsthetic rote,
Seem in themselves Its single listless aim,
And not their consequence.

Or again:

Rather they show that, like a knitter drowsed,
Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness,
The Will has woven with an absent heed
Since life first was; and ever will so weave.

It is characteristic of the writer that among these voices of the air there is no spirit of Hope or Joy. We have the Spirit Sinister, the Spirit Ironic, and so on. But the only approximation to human sympathy is the Spirit of Pity. In Mr. Hardy's Overworld as in his Underworld there seems no place for Hope—no momentary vision of that "far off, divine event to which the whole Creation moves."

The mundane action opens with a scene on a ridge in Wessex, with the open Channel beyond. A stage coach passes a group of infantry tramping along and singing

We be the King's men, hale and hearty,
Marching to meet one Bonaparty;
If he won't sail, lest the wind should blow,
We shall have marched for nothing, O!
Right fol-lol!

The talk of the passengers is of the imminent invasion and of Napoleon's letter to the King. Then the curtain rises on the Office of the Minister of Marine in Paris, and Napoleon's scheme for sending the British fleet on a wild goose chase across the Atlantic while Villeneuve returns to protect his descent upon England is disclosed. And again we have from the Spirit of the Earth the familiar note:

Howsoever wise
The governance of these massed mortalities,
A juster wisdom his who should have ruled
They had not been.

The scene changes to the House of Commons and we have Pitt battling in blank verse against the epigrams of Sheridan and the torrent of Fox, the text following closely the extant reports of the debate. Thence to Milan Cathedral where Napoleon puts on the crown of Lombardy, the omnipresent spirits accompanying the action with comments on the pitifulness of men and their idle plays:

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES.
What is the creed that these rich rites disclose?
SPIRIT OF THE YEARS.
A local thing called Christianity,
Which the wild dramas of this wheeling sphere
Include, with divers other such, in dim,
Pathetical, and brief parentheses;
Beyond whose reach, uninfluenced, unconcerned,
The systems of the suns go sweeping on
With all their many-mortaled planet train
In mathematic roll unceasingly.

At Gibraltar Nelson and Collingwood are discovered discussing the future and the secret intentions of Villeneuve. The premonition of the end comes to Nelson:

However, by God's help, I'll live to meet
These foreign boasters; yea, I'll finish them;
And then—well, Gunner Death may finish me!
Collingwood.
View not your life so gloomily, my lord:
'Tis charmed, a needed purpose to fulfil!
Nelson.
Ah, Coll. Lead bullets are not all that wound. . .
I have a feeling here of dying fires,
A sense of much and deep unworded censure,
Which, compassing about my private life,
Makes all my public service lustreless
In my own eyes.—I fear I am much condemned
For those dear Naples and Palermo days,
And her who was the sunshine of them all! . . .
He who is with himself dissatisfied,
Though all the world find satisfaction in him,
Is like a rainbow-coloured bird gone blind,
That gives delight it shares not. Happiness?
It's the philosopher's stone no alchemy
Shall light on in this world I am weary of.—
Smiling I'd pass to my long home to-morrow
Could I with honour, and my country's gain.

The note of comedy appears in a delightful scene in which Mr. Hardy's rustics are discovered watching for the signal fires on the heights of Wessex:

Private.
Clk! I be all right! I was in the ranks, helping to keep the ground at the review by the King this week. We was a wonderful sight—wonderful! The King said so again and again.—Yes, there was he, and there was I, though naturally not daring to move a' eyebrow in the presence of Majesty. I have come home on a night's leave—off there again to-morrow. Boney's expected every day, thank God! Yes, our hopes are to be fulfilled soon, as we say in the Army.
First Old Man.
There, there, Cantle; don't ye speak quite so large, and stand so over-upright. Your back is as holler as a fire-dog's. Do ye suppose that we on active service here don't know war news? Mind you don't go taking to your heels when the next alarm comes, as you did at last year's.
Private.
That had nothing to do with fighting, for I'm as bold as a lion when I'm up, and "Shoulder Fawlocks!" sounds as common as my own name to me.

Pitt, like Nelson, is nearing the end, and in a fine scene at Weymouth tries to secure the consent of the obstinate old King to a coalition with Fox. But in vain—"Rather than Fox, why, give me civil war." Villeneuve's lack of nerve destroys Napoleon's project and sends him back on that stupendous campaign which destroyed Mack at Ulm and the Russians and Austrians at Austerlitz. The fifth act covers Trafalgar, closing with the death of Nelson and the Chaplain's—

Yes . . . He has homed to where
There's no more sea.

Villeneuve's inglorious end, by his own hand in the inn at Rennes, follows, by a little violation of time in the interests of dramatic effect, and then we have another capital Wessex scene, with a song by one of the boatmen round the inn fire, who offers by way of apology the explanation that his "wyndpipe's a bit clogged since the wars hev made beer so mortal small."

In the wild October night-time, when the wind raved round the land,
And the Back-sea met the Front-sea, and our doors were blocked with sand,
And we heard the drub of Dead-man's Bay, where bones of thousands are,
We knew not what the day had done for us at Trafalgar.
(All) Had done,
Had done,
For us at Trafalgar!

Austerlitz is powerfully treated, and Napoleon's sense of the real factors in the conflict—England's gold and diplomacy against his military genius—is brought out in many asides:

I'll bid all states of Europe shut their ports
To England's arrogant bottoms, slowly starve
Her bloated revenues and monstrous trade,
Till all her hulls lie sodden in their docks,
And her grey island eyes in vain shall seek
One jack of hers upon the ocean plains!

The news of Austerlitz, with its apparent defeat of all his hopes, comes to Pitt at Bath and blows out the flickering flame of his life, and Part First closes with his

My country! How I leave my country.

And so for the present this Titanic drama closes. It is the drama of the pitifulness and futility of life. Napoleon, Pitt, Nelson, those figures that tower above the heads of the generations of men—what, after all, were they but poor puppets, fighting their antic battles in the presence of the wheeling Universe, their armies crawling like "molluscs on a leaf" over the face of our globe, themselves the weak and momentary instruments of a passionless and inscrutable Destiny, to whom time has no relation, and who uses up the nations like warp and weft in his eternal loom?

Thou art but as a word of his speech,
Thou art but as a wave of his hand,
Thou art brief as a glitter of sand
'Twixt tide and tide on his beach.
Thou art less than a spark of his fire,
Or a moment's mood of his soul;
Thou art lost as a note on the lips of the choir
That chant the chant of the Whole.

In Mr. Watson's magical verse we have the spirit of this drama of the children of the Earth—the playthings in the hand of the Unknowable.

From the prospectus at the close of the volume we gather that the second part of "The Dynasts," carries the action to Albuera, the drama closing with Waterloo. But while these later volumes are "in hand," their "publication is not guaranteed." It certainly remains to be seen whether the public have an appetite for this panoramic form of history. We can only say that we have been deeply impressed by the volume before us. It is devoid, it is true, of all the conventional springs of dramatic interest. There is no clash of personal passions, no awakening of the emotions born of the subtle play of human intercourse. But there is unfailing dignity in the handling of the vast design, except where the Spirits, embodied, are hailed as "strangers" in the sacred precincts of the Home—an incident which shows that Homer still nods. The verse is always energetic and rich in significance, the characterisation boldly and firmly sketched, and the action imagined with a rare instinct for the spirit of the scene. We shall await the next volume with deep interest.

The Times — Jan 15. 1904 (1st suppt)

MR. THOMAS HARDY'S DRAMA.

THE DYNASTS: A Drama. By THOMAS HARDY. Part I. (Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.)

Mr. Thomas Hardy's long silence has been broken at last with the first volume of a drama of the Napoleonic Wars in three parts, nineteen acts, and 130 scenes. His interest in the period, particularly as it affected his own now doubly famous Wessex, is a matter of common knowledge, and his admirers have long expected and hoped that he would treat it on a large scale. It is well to say at once that this is not the book we desired or expected. Why should Thomas Hardy, a master of prose narrative, have chosen to hamper himself with the dramatic form? Why should the poet who can interpret nature, idyllic or tragic, with perfect sympathy, yet too strict a conscience ever to make her the puppet of his plot, now relegate her to stage directions? Why should the great novelist, whom we valued above all things for his power of seeing and developing human character, content himself with the dead facts of school-book history?

To the first of our woful cries Mr. Hardy himself gives some kind of answer in his preface. "In the course of time," he says of the dramatic form, "such a shape would reveal itself to be an eminently readable one." We are forced to join issue with him at once. In the case of plays written for the stage, no one who has read many plays will deny that of all forms the dramatic is the most unreadable; in the case of the very few plays really written for "mental performance" only, the form is not actually the dramatic so much as the dialogic. The additional grip and vividness that may perhaps be gained at certain moments by the author's rejection of all the aids offered by the common form of narrative are no compensation for the difficulties he courts and the extra demand on the imagination of the reader. Mr. Bernard Shaw's stage-directions are a practical acknowledgment of this truth. The plays that are readable, the Greek and Elizabethan declamatory drama, Goethe's *Faust*, Congreve, Maeterlinck, or Ibsen (and many of this somewhat heterogeneous collection are also good acting plays) are readable because of other qualities in them—splendour or grace of language, poetry, wit, "psychology," or depth and breadth of philosophic suggestion too deep for any but the quickest minds to master in the thoughtless air of the playhouse—qualities that are proof against the difficulties of form with which, from the point of view of the study, the author is handicapped. And never yet has a play worth the name been known that had not for its foundation and coping-stone alike one element—the human. The dramatic form grew out of the desire that actual men might represent in their own persons—that is, in the most vivid way possible—the doings and feelings of actual men. They may be but pale ghosts of men moving in strange twilit worlds under the impulsion of an unknown power; they may be heroic men, fighting with or against good or evil deities; they may be full-blooded animals, intent on their own ends and conscious of no opposition except from their own kind; they may be enlightened and emancipated men tossing their caps at the gods and dancing in a whirling world; they may even be hopeless travesties of men, threadbare tatters of outworn traditions; but they are always individual, personal, human beings of some sort, suffering, rejoicing, struggling, demanding our sympathy or antipathy, developing themselves or revealing their past development by means of what they feel or do.

And so, passing over the second, we come to the third of our woful cries. In all these six acts of the first part of "The Dynasts" we find but four human beings—a first and second old man, a private, and a woman, who appear in one little scene in the second act. The old men, Dogberry and Verges once again, are in charge of a beacon on the coast, and the unwilling private is dragged up there in the middle of the night by his wife, who is sleepless with fear of "Boney." The private is "as bold as a lion when I'm up, and 'Shoulder Fawlocks!' sounds as common as my own name to me"; but he blanches at the thought that Boney eats babies for breakfast. His wife retorts:—"He should have the washing of 'em a few times; I warrant 'a wouldn't want to eat babies any more!" Here we have life, a warm life and a quaint humour of phrase that recall the Thomas Hardy of "Far from the Madding Crowd" and "Under the Greenwood Tree." Among the rest of the seventy and odd speaking persons of the drama there is not one human being. They do not suffer or develop; they reveal no personality, no littleness or greatness, no conflict with each other or with the gods. They talk just enough to advance the historical action and say the things that tradition reports them to have said, and they fight in dumb show. Napoleon has a burst of anger, Villeneuve soliloquizes before committing suicide, and Nelson dies on board the Victory, and the effect is no more than if we read of these things in a dictionary of biography. It is almost incredible that Mr. Hardy could have brought on George III. without a single characteristic oddity, or Sheridan without a flash of wit, but it is so. Two reasons for this lack of human interest come to hand at once. In six not over-long acts, which contain more than seventy earthly characters, there is clearly little room to expound any but one or two protagonists, and in this drama there are no protagonists as yet. And, in the second place, Mr. Hardy's principal aim has been to achieve strik

historical accuracy, even at the cost of throwing into blank verse the report of the Parliamentary debate on the repeal of the Defence Bill. We may be sure that the best things in Sheridan's speech are precisely the things that have not survived; and historical accuracy is not the stuff of which drama is made. Given a stage-performance, it is possible that a skilled actor might invest Nelson's death scene, as here written, with pathos; but this drama is not for the stage, and the reading of it leaves us unmoved.

The root of the matter, however, lies deeper than this. To accuse Thomas Hardy of going astray through such superficial mistakes as these is plainly absurd. "The Dynasts" is what it is through the author's deliberate artistic purpose. The second and third parts are yet to come; but we suspect that their publication will show that Mr. Hardy has been aiming, not at a drama of men, but at a drama of nations. The real characters will prove to be, not Napoleon, Nelson, Pitt, and the rest, but England, France, Austria, and Russia, or even, it may be, Europe and what for the moment we will call Fate. If so, we may see an experiment as interesting as it will be novel. Shakespeare's Chronicles are not concerned with the history of England; they are concerned with the bodies and minds of certain utterly human beings, whose troubles have got into the school-books by the accident of the sufferers' birth. Other men have been pious and incompetent besides Henry VI.; others have been incompetent and slothful besides Richard II. With them and their fellow Kings we are still on the old ground of common humanity. The drama of nations may be possible and it may not; the second and third parts of "The Dynasts" will show, perhaps, that the idea is justified of its child. For the present, judgment must be reserved.

The other part of Mr. Hardy's purpose is of more immediate importance. He has invented, as an accompaniment to the progress of the drama on earth, a number of "Phantom Intelligences" to comment on it. The most important of these are the Ancient Spirit of the Years, the Spirit of the Pities, and Spirits Sinister and Ironic; and their office is to play Virgil to the reader's Dante. Mr. Hardy is careful to point out in his preface that, with the exception of the Pities—"mere juveniles," as the Ironic Spirit calls them, "who only came into being in what the earthlings call their Tertiary Age"—these Phantom Intelligences do not "approximate to 'the Universal Sympathy of human nature—the spectator idealized' of the Greek Chorus." Strange to say, their office is the exact opposite. It is to stifle all sympathy, all interest, all speculation. For behind them is the "Immanent Will," a blind, unconscious, almighty force, an automatic sense without knowledge of what It does or reason for doing it.

> . . . In the foretime, even to the germ of Being,
> Nothing appears of shape to indicate
> That cognizance has marshalled things terrene,
> Or will (such is my thinking) in my span.
> Rather they show that, like a knitter drowsed,
> Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness,
> The Will has woven with an absent heed
> Since life first was; and ever will so weave.

These doctrines, says Mr. Hardy, "are but tentative, and are advanced with little eye to a systematized philosophy warranted to lift 'the burthen of the mystery' of this unintelligible world." May be; but their influence on the drama is none the less damning. Over and over again the protests of the Pities are used as opportunities for the repetition of the doctrine that these men, even this Napoleon, a Giant Terror to half the world, are nothing. They have no purpose, no will. They are puppets, dancing on strings, helpless impersonal agents of the clockwork thought of a blind and unreasoning It. Could any doctrine have been chosen, even as a hypothesis, more fatal to the interest of the drama? What chance have we of being stirred to laughter or tears? What room for speculation on the doctrine itself, to say nothing of the results of its operation on earth? We look down from vast heights on beings far less significant than ants, and see our heroes, our men of flesh and blood, of brave hearts and golden tongues, as they appear to the conscious agents of an unconscious Nothing. For Mr. Hardy, whether purposely or not, has taken the point of view of his Immanent Will, and so has been blinded to the fact that these men were men—beings, in their own eyes and in ours, of character; that is, with power to choose and to suffer and be glad, and only interesting or conceivable to us in those terms. Other poets have shown us men driven by inexorable fate or waging war against Heaven; but they showed them, as Mr. Hardy himself used to do, from the human level, and we shared their struggles and their fall, to our own purification. Here there is nothing to fight, and we see not men, but puppets. Mr. Hardy is on the side of his angels, and the world has withered.

Of such matters as construction and unity of impression, it is too early yet to speak. This first part takes us only to Napoleon's return to Paris after Austerlitz and the death of Pitt. Mr. Hardy disclaims any attempt at an organic structure of action; but it may be that the publication of the second and third parts will knit up what now is scattered and piecemeal, and display an artistic whole which at present can only be guessed at. Of the blank verse it is enough now to say that it sometimes reaches dignity, but never achieves distinction.

Times Jan 29 1904 LITERARY SUPPLEMENT,

THE DRAMA.

"THE DYNASTS": A SUGGESTION.

Evidently Mr. Thomas Hardy's drama, like Mr. Charles Surface's conduct, has given several worthy readers cause for much uneasiness. A drama of the Napoleonic wars, "in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes," is, indeed, a fearful sort of wildfowl. One part, six acts, and six-and-thirty scenes are before us; the rest are "in hand," but "their publication is not guaranteed." Were Mr. Hardy a contemporary of Théophile Gautier and Augustus Mackeat and Philothée O'Neddy, we should surmise that his whim was to *épater le bourgeois*. In any case the burgess has an uncomfortable sense of disorientation. He is uncertain what to make of *The Dynasts*; he is only certain that it is not what he expected. Where is he to place this so-called "drama"? Clearly, it will not go on the same shelf with either *Macbeth* or *Charley's Aunt*. Apparently, Mr. Hardy himself shares the belief of his critics that he has produced something "new and strange." We believe that to be a mistake. We think that "prætorian here, prætorian there, we ken the biggin' o't." The author of *The Dynasts* has not invented a new dramatic or *quasi*-dramatic species. But he has certainly developed it, and given it promotion, an improved *status*. Before we attempt to make this good, however, there is something to be said about one or two general questions which Mr. Hardy raises in his preface.

There is, first, the general question of plays which are not intended to be played, but only to be read, plays "for mental performance," as Mr. Hardy puts it. To those who urge that an unplayable play is a contradiction in terms he replies that "the question seems to be an unimportant matter of terminology." Compositions cast in the dramatic shape, he says, were without doubt originally written for the stage only; "but in the course of time such a shape would reveal itself to be an eminently readable one." Would it? Has it? We think not. But even if it be conceded that some plays happen to be readable, does that prove that plays ought to be written in order to be read? By no means. Some plays may be read, just as, *faute de mieux*, shoe-leather may be used as an article of diet instead of as a protection for the feet. But, to adapt a familiar line from an Oxford Prize Poem,

> It *may* be eaten, but it is not good.

No, with all respect to Mr. Hardy, the question is much more than an unimportant matter of terminology. It is a question of the relation of means to ends. Just as a play may be readable, so an opera score may be playable in a pianoforte arrangement. Mr. Hardy would call it an opera where everything that the piano cannot render is left for mental performance. We should call it an abuse of the opera, which is intended for the stage, and an abuse of the piano, which is intended for pianoforte music. Surely it is a commonplace that every art-form is conditioned by its medium? The shape, the structure, the points of inflexion, the perspective of a play are all determined by the mechanical necessities of the theatre and the fact that it is something to be seen and heard by a spectator. A book, which is something to be read, has no such restrictions; it has others, but not these. If you impose upon a book the form of a play—a form, that is to say, designed to meet exigencies which in its case do not exist—you are misapplying or wasting the means at your disposal; you are running a sack-race; you are playing fives, like Cavanagh in Hazlitt's essay, with your clenched fist. At the best, you have achieved a *tour de force*. Let us take an example from Mr. Hardy's old profession. It is an elementary principle in architecture that structure is conditioned by material. Stone demands one kind of building, iron another, wood a third. Suppose an architect were laboriously to construct an iron bridge under the limitations proper to a stone bridge, would Mr. Hardy applaud the feat? No, he would say it was bad architecture. So we say when it is attempted to build a book according to the methods of a play, or a play according to the methods of a book. Lessing has something very much to the point (Hamburg Dramaturgy, 5th February, 1768):—"It is not enough," he says, "that a work produces an effect on us"—*e.g.*, that a play is readable—"its effect must also be that which properly belongs to it. . . . What is the use of building a theatre, dressing up men and women, putting their memories to the torture, crowding the whole town into a hall, if any work when represented is only to produce some of the effects which might have been produced by a story read in the chimney-corner?" So we may ask, What is the use of enjoying all the means open to the story-teller if he is to sacrifice most of those means to the vain hope of rivalling the playwright, who has quite other means?

Nor will it do to rely, as Mr. Hardy does, upon the imagination of the reader, or "mental" spectator. "The spectator, in thought, becomes a performer whenever called upon, and cheerfully makes himself the utility man of the gaps." Unfortunately, the "gaps" in a closet-play, being just those parts of a play which cannot be expressed in dialogue, are its vital parts. The great passions are mute. The culminating point of a play is not a speech, but an action, or a picture of which the effect resides in the mere juxtaposition of certain personages. It is at these moments that the closet-playwright suspends—is bound to suspend—work, while the "mental" spectator comes in and takes up the burden. Asking so much of him, Mr. Hardy is rather unkind to call him merely a utility man. The fact that the whole burden of producing "mental drama" is shifted from the author to the reader at the most important moment of the story seems to us a crushing condemnation of the *genre*. Mr. Hardy is quite right in calling it a "mental performance"; but it is the reader who has to bear the brunt of the performing. And so we fully agree with Mr. Hardy when he goes on to say:—"Whether mental performance alone may not eventually be the fate of all drama, other than that of contemporary or frivolous life, is a kindred question not without interest." It has, indeed, a fearful interest for those of us who, like the Shah, prefer to have our dancing done for us. For our own part, we should not like to raise Mr. Hardy's conjecture at the banquet which is to be given in London shortly to our distinguished scene-painters. The spectacular resources of the stage were never so abundant as they are at present; the art of giving an environment of illusion to the archaic, the mystic, the poetic was never before brought to so high a pitch.

Enough of general questions. There remains the specific one as to the suitability of *The Dynasts* for stage representation. Obviously it is not possible for the ordinary theatre. It "thinks in continents" and deals in whole fleets and armies, Houses of Commons, vast cathedral congregations, and thronged streets. That is to say, it is on too vast a scale for the ordinary stage. Further, its scheme includes a "chorus" of spirits, for whom there could be no appropriate place on any stage. Are we, then, with Mr. Hardy, to relegate the play to the region—which we have done our best to describe as a No Man's Land—of "mental performance"? Well, we suggest that this is not after all inevitable. Mr. Hardy himself, it is plain, has hankerings after actual performance, something "taking the shape of a monotonic delivery of speeches, with dreamy conventional gestures, something in the manner traditionally maintained by the old Christmas mummers, the curiously hypnotizing impressiveness of whose automatic style—that of persons who spoke by no will of their own—will be remembered by all who ever experienced it. Gauzes or screens to blur outlines might still further shut off the actual." Here Mr. Hardy is "getting warm," as the children say; he has come very near guessing the way in which his panoramic drama might be performed. For performed his play could be, we feel convinced; because it really is dramatically conceived. We mean that Mr. Hardy—it is the test of the dramatist—always sees things solid. Venables said of Carlyle (Sir M. Grant Duff's Diary, March, 1881):—"He had a stereoscopic imagination; he put everything before you in a solid shape." That quality, which is a luxury in an historian, is a necessity in a dramatist. We find it in the author of *The Dynasts*; he has a stereoscopic imagination. In other words, he allows himself no passages of analysis, reverie, mere description, or other expedients of the novelist which are non-transferable to space of three dimensions. But, as we have said, no ordinary theatre has the space for a panoramic play. What, then, is the solution? To any one who has glanced at the play, with a desire to see it represented, the answer "leaps at the eyes." Speaking of the human protagonists, one of the Spirits describes them as "mere marionettes," and again we read:—

> Forgetting the Prime Mover of the gear
> As puppet-watchers him who pulls the strings.

Indeed, that idea is at the very core of Mr. Hardy's drama, the idea that these Napoleons and Pitts and Nelsons are puppets, blind parts of the Immanent Will. And now you cannot help seeing how this play should be represented; it should be a puppet-show—or rather (for the perspective of vast crowds is best managed that way) a series of shadow pictures. It would be an adaptation of the puppet-show to philosophic drama. That, as we began by saying, is not an entirely new dramatic species. Some years ago, at the Chat Noir, this very "Epopée" of the Napoleonic wars was presented in a series of "Ombres Chinoises" designed by M. Caran d'Ache. M. Jules Lemaître speaks enthusiastically of the profound impression created by these little silhouettes, the sense of multitude, of destiny actuating the movements of armies, which is precisely the impression to be created by *The Dynasts*. We thought this example "good enough," as it stood; but, on turning up the article "Marionettes" in the "Encyclopædia Britannica"—what was our joy to find that our idea for Mr. Hardy's panoramic drama had already been anticipated in fact on our own countryside! In Vol. XV., p. 547, you may read that "Brown's Theatre of Arts (*i.e.*, a puppet theatre) showed at country fairs, from 1830 to 1840, the battle of Trafalgar, Napoleon's army crossing the Alps, and the marble palace of St. Petersburg." After this, we hope to hear no more from Mr. Hardy about "mental performance"; let Brown's Theatre of Arts (which we dare swear, was well known all over Wessex, from Budmouth to Christminster) show him the right way.

THE TIMES FEBRUARY 5, 1904.

CORRESPONDENCE.

"THE DYNASTS": A REJOINDER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—The objections raised by your dramatic critic to the stage-form adopted in "The Dynasts" for presenting a rapid mental vision of the Napoleonic wars—objections which I had in some degree anticipated in the preface to the book—seem to demand a reply, inasmuch as they involve a question of literary art that is of far wider importance than as it affects a single volume. I regret that in the space of a letter I shall only be able to touch upon it briefly.

Your critic is as absolute as the gravedigger in *Hamlet*. I understand his contention to be that to give a panoramic poem (which "The Dynasts" may perhaps be called) the form of a stage-drama—even a conventionalized form—or to give such a form to anything whatever that is intended for the study only, is false in principle. Whether the aim of "The Dynasts" was to dumbfound the worthy burgher (as your critic surmises in the French tongue) or not, his theory certainly does dumbfound, or, as he would say, *épate*, the present writer. According to it one must conclude that such productions as Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound," Byron's "Cain," and many other unactable play-like poems are a waste of means, and, in his own words, "may be read just as, *faute de mieux*, shoe-leather may be used as an article of diet."

His view would seem to be based on an assumption that in no circumstances must an art borrow the methods of a neighbour art. Yet if there is one thing needful to the vitality of any art it is the freedom of the worker therein from the restraint of such scientific reasoning as would lay down this law, freedom from the *rationale* of every development that he adopts. The artistic spirit is at bottom a spirit of caprice, and in some of its finest productions in the past it could have given no clear reason why they were run in this or that particular mould, and not in some more obvious one. And if it could be proved that in "The Dynasts" nothing is gained, but much lost, by its form, that attempt would still have been legitimate.

Nevertheless, if your reviewer's statement that the stage-form is inherently an unnatural one for reading, a waste of available means, were strictly accurate, I would concede to him the expediency, though not the obligation, of avoiding it in a book. But why, one asks, is it bad for reading? Because, I understand him to answer, it was invented for the stage. He might as well assert that bitter ale is bad drinking for England because it was invented for India. His critical hand is, indeed, subdued to what it works in when he pens such a theory. It surely ought to have occurred to him that this play-shape is essentially, if not quite literally, at one with the instinctive, primitive, narrative shape. In legends and old ballads, in the telling of "an owre true tale" by country-folks on winter nights over a dying fire, the place and time are briefly indicated at the beginning in almost all cases; and then the body of the story follows as what he said and what she said, the action being often suggested by the speeches alone. This likeness between the order of natural recital and the order of theatrical utility may be accidental; but there it is; and to write Scene so-and-so, Time so-and-so, instead of Once upon a time, At such a place, is a trifling variation that makes no difference to the mental images raised. Of half-a-dozen people I have spoken to about reading plays, four say that they can imagine the enactment in a read play better than in a read novel or epic poem. It is a matter of idiosyncrasy.

The methods of a book and the methods of a play, which he says are so different, are fundamentally similar. It must be remembered that the printed story is not a representation, but, like the printed play, a means of producing a representation, which is done in the one case by sheer imaginativeness, in the other by imaginativeness pieced out with material helps. Why, then, should not a somewhat idealized semblance of the latter means be used in the former case?

For a rather digressive reason your reviewer drags in the art of architecture. In mercy to his own argument he should have left architecture alone. Like those of a play for reading, its features are continually determined by no mechanical, material, or methodic necessities (which are confused together by your critic). As for mechanical necessities, that purest relic of Greek architecture, the Parthenon, is a conventionalized representation of the necessities of a timber house, many of which are not necessities in stone, such as the imitations of wood rafter-ends, beam-ends, and ceiling-joists. As for necessities of purpose, medieval architects constructed church-parapets with the embrasures of those of a fortress, and on the Continent planned the eastern ends of their Cathedrals in resemblance of a Roman Hall of Justice. In respect of necessities of method, that art, throughout its history, has capriciously subdued to its service, in sheer waywardness, the necessities of other arts, so that one can find in it a very magazine of examples of my own procedure in "The Dynasts." Capitals, cornices, bosses, and scores of other details, instead of confining their shapes to those strictly demanded by their office, borrow from the art of sculpture without scruple and without reason. Sculptured human figures are boldly taken, and, by the name of caryatids, are used as columns. In sculpture itself we find the painter's "necessity" borrowed—a superficies—and used for bas-reliefs, even though shapes are misrepresented by so doing. And if we turn to poetry we find that rhythm and rhyme are a non-necessitous presentation of language under conditions that in strictness appertain only to music.

But analogies between the arts are apt to be misleading, and having said thus much in defence of the form chosen, even supposing another to have been available, I have no room left for more than a bare assertion that there was available no such other form that would readily allow of the necessary compression of space and time. I believe that any one who should sit down and consider at leisure how to present so wide a subject within reasonable compass would decide that this was, broadly speaking, the only way.

Before concluding I should like to correct a misapprehension of your critic's, and of others, that I have "hankerings after actual performance" of "The Dynasts." My hankerings, if any, do not lie that way. But I fancy his do. His laborious search in cyclopædias for some means of performing it plainly betray that he is dying to see the show; which is flattering. But if he will look again at the last paragraph of the preface he will perceive that my remarks on performance refer to old English dramas only.

Your obedient servant,

Max Gate, Dorset, Feb. 2. THOMAS HARDY.

THE TIMES Feb 9. 1904

THE DRAMA.

"THE DYNASTS" AND THE PUPPETS.

Mr. Thomas Hardy is a little difficult to please. We were at some pains (he unkindly says that we have laboriously searched in cyclopædias) to show him how he might get "The Dynasts" acted; and he is as angry with us for our labour as Byron (with more reason) was angry with Elliston for acting "Marino Faliero." We thought, in our innocence, that he had "hankerings after actual performance." He repudiates our assumption, and asks us to look again at his preface. We have looked again at his preface, and find that his suggestions as to a possible means of performance are the sequel to a speculation that "mental performance alone may eventually be the fate of all drama other than that of contemporary or frivolous life." He offers something as a "practicable compromise." As "The Dynasts" does not deal with contemporary or frivolous life, it seemed only logical to conclude that, in suggesting a "practicable compromise," a means of actual performance, Mr. Hardy had that play, among others, in his eye. Well, we must, of course, accept his assurance that it was not so; but, if it was not so, he convicts himself of irrelevance. In any case, it seems that our own "practicable compromise" is not at all to his taste. We suggested (not out of cyclopædias but from study of the *Chat Noir* repertory) a puppet-show. Evidently Mr. Hardy thinks such a mode of actual performance beneath the dignity of his "panoramic poem." We are by no means of that opinion. We can conceive nothing better suited to reveal the "true inwardness" of "The Dynasts." For, as indeed we have already shown by citing chapter and verse from the text, the whole philosophic import of that work resides in the concept that the very greatest figures of history—the Nietzschean "overmen," your Napoleons and Nelsons and Pitts—are but puppets of what Mr. Hardy calls the "Immanent Will." Why not, then, actually *show* them as puppets? By that means, and by that means alone, the actual mechanism of the performance would be a perpetual symbol and reminder of the philosophy impressing the whole work. Such a chance for securing complete harmony between the medium of expression and the meaning to be expressed is rare indeed. In his preface Mr. Hardy alludes to Æschylus. His mention of that mighty dramatist reminds us that certain plays of M. Maeterlinck have been described as "de l'Eschyle pour *pupazzi* malades." Withdrawing the epithet "malades," which is inapplicable to Mr. Hardy's robust characters, we may describe "The Dynasts" as "Æschylus for puppets." And to say that is really to pay Mr. Hardy a magnificent compliment.

We will make him one admission. In advocating the performance of his play as a puppet-show, while we were glad to think we were doing his work a good turn, we were at heart more concerned for the fortunes of the puppets themselves. Like Partridge, we "love a puppet-show of all the pastimes upon earth." Happy Partridge! For it was in his time (according to the puppet-showman) that "the present age was not improved in anything so much as in their puppet-shows; which, by throwing out Punch and his wife Joan and such idle trumpery, were at last brought to be a rational entertainment." Since that day (whether by the re-introduction of Punch and Judy we know not) the puppet-shows have declined, and we caught with delight at the chance offered by "The Dynasts" of bringing them "to a rational entertainment" once again. Of course, for your puppet-show "new model," your puppet-show of high philosophic reach, such a showman as Fielding's honest ignoramus would not suffice. That worthy's philosophy, it will be remembered, did not extend beyond a tolerance of all religions, save that of the Presbyterians, "because they were enemies to puppet-shows," and our new showman would have to be a poet (say Mr. Hardy) rolling out his blank verse as he manipulated the wires. Here and there in "The Dynasts" he would have some practical trouble. For example, in Act VI., scene 5, which describes the meeting of Napoleon and Francis after Austerlitz, the stage direction is "They formally embrace." Now any one who has ever seen an embrace of marionettes will know that it is an exceedingly difficult operation. They fall generally with a jerk into each others' arms. We tremble to think how they would manage a "formal" embrace between august Sovereigns. But there is one thing even more difficult than embracing on the puppet-stage, and that is the delivery of a letter. On the regular stage this is considered the meanest kind of employment. People cannot render higher testimony to the self-sacrifice of this or that veteran at the Théâtre Français than to say that he will consent to "come on with a letter." Now on the marionette stage this is the greatest exploit of all—the transfer of a letter from one person to another. The ineffectual quiverings, sudden darts, agonized wobblings, desperate shots, and clutches at nothing which take place before the transfer is effected! So, when one reads in Act VI., scene 6, of Mr. Hardy's play, the stage direction, "Presents a despatch to Pitt"; we feel that for the puppets the critical moment has arrived. With careful study, however, these difficulties could be got over. The fact is we want a new "Poetics"—puppet-show "Poetics" ("de l'Aristote pour *pupazzi*").

Our desire—so unpalatable to Mr. Hardy—to see "The Dynasts" played, springs from our conviction that it really is playable. It is, we think, and are glad to think, a drama, and a very fine drama, in essence; not, as Mr. Hardy would have us think, a composition which merely apes the dramatic form. Mr. Hardy, as we have said, sees solid, he has the "stereoscopic" imagination. Had we considered the work unplayable, we should never have troubled ourselves about it in this column. But Mr. Hardy boldly champions the cause of unplayable plays. We ask why, if you are writing a narrative to be read, forgo all the privileges of narrative art and hamper yourself by the restrictions proper to a spectacle? Mr. Hardy answers, in effect, that is the artist's affair, he has a right to his caprice, and "the artistic spirit is at bottom a spirit of caprice." Well, caprices must be judged by their fruits; and criticism would fail in its duty if it did not point out that this particular "caprice" of aiming by the medium of one art at the pleasure proper to another, a very popular caprice at the present day, is as noxious as it is popular. It has covered, for example, the Academy walls with "anecdote" pictures, pictures which aim at a literary pleasure and not at the pleasure to be got out of paint. It has filled Mudie's library with novels of "description," which aim at a "pictorial" pleasure instead of the pleasure of literature. It has filled our playhouses with "adapted" novels, which aim at the pleasure of the novel instead of the pleasure of the play. It has filled our concert-halls with "tone poems" and "programme music," aiming at the pleasure of thought instead of at the pleasure of sound. In short, this artistic "caprice" is one of the direst artistic plagues of the time. Says Mr. Hardy, the artists are there to indulge this or any other "caprice." Yes, and the critics are there to pounce on them, and to distinguish between good caprices and bad. Mr. Hardy avows himself "dumbfounded" by our contention that it is false, in principle, to give the stage-form to what is not intended for the stage. We are afraid we must leave him dumbfounded, for we have no other arguments at his service than those which he has failed to understand. How is it possible to argue usefully with a disputant who believes that "the methods of a book and the methods of a play are fundamentally similar," who says that "the play-shape is essentially, if not quite literally, at one with the instinctive, primitive, narrative shape," and who supposes himself to have proved this last proposition by pointing out that just as in primitive narratives place and time are briefly indicated at the beginning, so they are in plays? Surely it is hardly necessary to remark that Mr. Hardy, when he is here talking of plays, is not really thinking of plays at all, but of play-*books*. It is quite true that "to write Scene so-and-so, Time so-and-so, instead of Once upon a time, At such a place, is a trifling variation that makes no difference to the mental images raised." But the acted playwright does not *write* Scene so-and-so, Time so-and-so, he actually presents them; and that makes all the difference. Enough, however, of this vexed question of unplayable plays, which really is not relevant to the case of "The Dynasts." Probably in arguing for their "legitimacy," Mr. Hardy conceived himself to be "preaching for his own saint." Somehow or other he has got it into his head that his play is unplayable. We have done our best to convince him that he is mistaken, that he has written a real play without knowing it, and that the means of actual representation lie ready to [illegible] his hand. But he will not have it, he [illegible]

having done something quite regular, and wishes to be regarded as having indulged in a "caprice." This is rather like Lydia Languish, who doated on the contraband "Beverley" but rejected the honourable addresses of Jack Absolute. Mr. Hardy, however, shall think what he pleases of his play. For our part we have so sincere an admiration for it that we are still, as he says, "dying to see the show."

The Times. Feb 19 1904

CORRESPONDENCE.

"THE DYNASTS": A POSTSCRIPT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Your critic has humorously conducted his discourse away from his original charge against "The Dynasts" into the quaint and unexpected channel of real performance by means of fantoccini, Chinese shadows, and other startling apparatus. This is highly creditable to his ingenious mind; yet we must remember that the whole fabric of his vision arose only out of his altruistic desire to provide me with a means of escape from what he holds to be an untenable position. But I still absolutely deny it to be such, though I may seem ungrateful. I think I have shown that an attempt to write a spectacular poem (if he will allow me to use the expression for want of a better), more or less resembling a stage-play, though not one, has full artistic justification and is not "false in principle," as he stated. He naturally continues to think the other way; and there I fear the matter must remain.

But the truth seems to be—if I may say a final word here on a point outside the immediate discussion—that the real offence of "The Dynasts" lies, not in its form as such, but in the philosophy which gave rise to the form. This is revealed by symptoms in various quarters, even (if I am not mistaken) by your critic's own faint tendency to harden his heart against the "Immanent Will." Worthy British Philistia, unlike that ancient Athens it professes to admire, not only does not ask for a new thing, but even shies at that which merely appears at first sight to be a new thing. As with a certain King, the reverse of worthy, in the case of another play, some people ask, "Have you read the argument? Is there no offence in't?" There can hardly be, assuredly, on a fair examination. The philosophy of "The Dynasts," under various titles and phases, is almost as old as civilization. Its fundamental principle, under the name of Predestination, was preached by St. Paul. "Being predestinated"—says the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians, "Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own Will"; and much more to the same effect, the only difference being that externality is assumed by the Apostle rather than immanence. It has run through the history of the Christian Church ever since. St. Augustine held it vaguely, Calvin held it fiercely, and, if our English Church and its Nonconformist contemporaries have now almost abandoned it to our men of science (among whom determinism is a commonplace), it was formerly taught by Evangelical divines of the finest character and conduct. I should own in fairness that I think this has been shrewdly recognized in some quarters whose orthodoxy is unimpeachable, where the philosophy of "The Dynasts" has been handled as sanely and as calmly as I could wish.

Nevertheless, as was said in the Preface, I have used the philosophy as a plausible theory only. Though, for that matter, I am convinced that, whether we uphold this or any other conjecture on the cause of things, men's lives and actions will be little affected thereby, these being less dependent on abstract reasonings than on the involuntary inter-social emotions, which would more probably be strengthened than weakened by a sense that humanity and other animal life (roughly, though not accurately, definable as puppetry) forms the conscious extremity of a pervading urgence, or will.

Your obedient servant,

Max Gate, Dorset, Feb. 16. THOMAS HARDY.

Friday Post
January 15 1904.

I see that Mr. Thomas Hardy has just completed a play in no less than nineteen acts and thirty scenes! I have only one remark to make on this, and that is—"Crikey!"

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AUTHORS' MISTAKES

To the Editor of THE OUTLOOK (Jan 23. 1904.)

May I draw attention to Mr. Hardy's "The Dynasts"?

W. E.

THE ATHENÆUM

Nº 3978, JAN. 23, 1904

DRAMA

The Dynasts: a Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. By Thomas Hardy. Part I. (Macmillan & Co.)

SIGNS have not been wanting that Mr. Hardy, dissatisfied with the medium in which he won his fame, covets laurels other than those of the novelist. His latest work constitutes an attempt to combine historic chronicle with poetic drama, and to supply a series of animated tableaux of the wars and preparations of Bonaparte from the menaced invasion of England to the setting of the Napoleonic star at Waterloo. Of this huge scheme, to which are to be dedicated nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes, a single portion—occupying six acts and carrying the action to the battle of Austerlitz and its consequences, including the death of Pitt—now appears. A second portion will end in 1811 with the defeat of Soult at Albuera; while a third will show the restoration of peace among the nations. Room exists for doubt whether the inception of an idea of this magnitude is not of interest more general and widespread than its execution. In some respects the scheme is not altogether novel. 'The Dynasts' links itself on one side with the drama of Æschylus and his successors, and on another with the chronicle plays of Shakspeare. Especially close, as is pointed out in the preface, is the connexion with the Hellenic drama, in that whatever is not explicit in the fable is assumed to exist in the minds of the public. While, however, the Greek tragedians confine themselves in a trilogy to the development of a single theme, Mr. Hardy's work passes from country to country, hopping—let it be said without irreverence—from Weymouth to Boulogne, and from Ulm to Trafalgar. In this respect it comes, of course, nearest to the historical plays of Shakspeare, an imitation of these being suggested throughout.

In adopting his new method Mr. Hardy forfeits much—it may even be said most—that has hitherto contributed to his success. The atmosphere of Wessex is still maintained, and the opening portion of the play is to some extent a development of 'The Trumpet-Major,' issued a score years ago, which does not rank as one of Mr. Hardy's best works of fiction. He foregoes, however, all feminine interest and influence—at least so far as the present portion is concerned, though such may, perhaps, be obtained when in a subsequent instalment he has to depict the unparalleled sorrows of Queen Louisa. There is no character even like the Anne Garland of 'The Trumpet-Major.' Queen Charlotte, the English princesses, Lady Caroline Lamb, seven Milanese young ladies, and the princesses of Joséphine's Court are mutes; and Joséphine herself and Lady Hester Stanhope are scarcely more than lay figures. Such attempt at characterization as is permitted is but slight; and though some care is taken with personages such as Napoleon himself, George III., Pitt, Nelson, Hardy, and Villeneuve, the result is seldom more than the production of a thumb-nail sketch.

An abandonment of a method by means of which Mr. Hardy has reached something like supremacy needs more justification than can be supplied. Whatever Mr. Hardy says demands and repays attention. We are not of those, moreover, who would restrict a man's efforts to one line, however brilliant the success achieved in it. Were this done the author of the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' might never have written 'Redgauntlet' or 'Rob Roy.' But the change in Mr. Hardy is in the wrong direction. His gifts are not in any marked sense poetical. Of lyrical fervour he shows no trace. In the weightier passages he is generally crabbed, and in the lighter uninspired, while certain scenes can scarcely be acquitted of bathos. Shakspeare, in presenting the debates of princes and councillors, employs language which is worthy of the occasion, often dignified and sometimes heroic. We do not expect from a representative of a corrupt English borough the language of a Percy or a Prince Hal. To convey in verse of marvellous blankness a debate in the House of Commons, in which participate Pitt, Sheridan, Windham, Whitbread, Tierney, Fox, Fuller, and Bathurst, is, however, work for inferior hands, and not for the author of 'Far from the Madding Crowd' and 'The Woodlanders.'

Action and comment are enshrined in a species of lyrical utterance of what are called "Phantom Intelligences." The purpose and mission of these are explained at some length. Their most obvious function is to serve as a species of chorus. "Their doctrines," says Mr. Hardy, "are but tentative, and are advanced with but little eye to a systematized philosophy warranted to lift the 'burthen of the mystery' of this unintelligible world." A purpose these beings serve is as mouthpieces for the species of revolt with which the mind of the writer is charged. One group only, that of the Pities, "approximates to the 'Universal Sympathy of human nature—the spectator idealized,'" as, after Schlegel, Mr. Hardy calls this classical chorus. The employment of It instead of He in allusion to the "First or Fundamental Energy" is justified as a necessary and logical consequence of the long abandonment by thinkers of the anthropomorphic conception of the same. Here, one would suppose, is a chance for the author to display the lyrical gifts he cultivates. Mystery and speculation there are in abundance, and we think of Goethe and the second part of 'Faust,' and of other works which in Tudor times would have been characterized as metaphysical. In no case, however—not in the Spirit or Chorus of the Years, of the Pities, of Rumour, in the Spirits Sinister and Ironic, Spirit Messengers, Recording Angels, or the Shade of the Earth—do we find anything that reconciles us to the choice of method, or greatly inspires or delights us. In intelligibility and in pessimism the utterance of the Spirit of the Years is dominant:—

> .....in the Foretime, even to the germ of Being,
> Nothing appears of shape to indicate
> That cognizance has marshalled things terrene,
> Or will (such is my thinking) in my span.
> Rather they show that, like a knitter drowsed,
> Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness,
> The Will has woven with an absent heed
> Since life first was; and ever will so weave.

With a recollection of the French definition of life as a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel, the Spirit Ironic corrects to "comedy" the phrase "terrestrial tragedy," used by the Spirit of the Pities to qualify the contests between France and opposing Europe. The Spirit Sinister, meanwhile, is scarcely more than a species of modern Puck, declaring that

> Those things they best please me
> That befal preposterously.

The nearest approach to poetry we find in the rousing boatman's song after Trafalgar and the description of the state of affairs given in recitation from a book by the Recording Angel. In this the rhythmical effect is impressive, as is the recurrent rhyme at the end of each quatrain. The "the" in l. 12 is worse than superfluous:—

> Now mellow-eyed Peace is made captive,
> And Vengeance is chartered
> To deal forth its dooms on the Peoples
> With sword and with spear.
> Men's musings are busy with forecasts
> Of musters and battle,
> And visions of shock and disaster
> Rise red on the year.
> The easternmost ruler sits wistful,
> And tense he to midward;
> The King to the west mans his borders
> In front and in the rear.
> While one they eye, flushed from his crowning,
> Ranks legions around him
> To shake the enisled neighbour nation
> And close her career!

A play the characters in which number tens of thousands, and in which supernumeraries are counted by regiments and armies, is obviously not intended to be acted. Mr. Hardy suggests as a conceivable compromise "a monotonic delivery of speeches with dreamy conventional gestures, something in the manner traditionally maintained by the old Christmas mummers." The idea that anything of the kind will ever be attempted may be dismissed.

After the coronation of Napoleon in Milan Cathedral, Act I. sc. vi., the Spirit of the Pities demands—

> What is the creed that these rich rites disclose?

And receives from the Spirit of the Years the answer—

> A local thing called Christianity.

(continued next page)

George III. speaks, Act IV. sc. i., to Pitt of Napoleon as

> This wicked bombardier of dynasties
> That rule by right Divine—

a characteristic touch.

Some of the verses have a quasi-Gilbertian flavour. A Chorus of Ironic Spirits says or sings—

> A pertinent query, in truth!—
> But spoil not the sport by your ruth:
> 'Tis enough to make half
> Yonder zodiac laugh
> When rulers begin to allude
> To their lack of ambition,
> And strong opposition
> To all but the general good!

Forms such as "navarchy," "puppetry," and "bombastry" are met with, and much of the language is stiffly brocaded. In negatives Mr. Hardy is venturesome, introducing such words as "incognizance," "inexist," "uncurse," and "unknow."

The work, so far as it has gone, may be read with interest and admiration for Mr. Hardy's spacious sense of history. We trust, however, that, when his present scheme is finished, the author will recur to that field of Wessex prose in which a few touches here show that his mastery is unrivalled.

Mercure de France.
(April. 1904) Paris

Mr. Thomas Hardy nous est beaucoup connu comme romancier; nous avons lu ses romans et ses nouvelles, en tout dix-sept volumes; il nous est connu aussi un peu comme poète et nous avons lu ses deux volumes de vers: *Wessex Poems and other verses* et *Poems of the Past and the Present*; les lecteurs français ont admiré, dans des traductions, *Tess d'Urberville*, *Jude l'Obscur* et *Barbara* (*Far from the Madding Crowd*). En Angleterre, Mr. Thomas Hardy est proclamé par certains le plus grand écrivain anglais actuel, et ils le placent même au-dessus de George Meredith. Bref, Mr. Thomas Hardy est, et cela légitimement, admiré et respecté de tous. Mais il vient de causer à tous une surprise. Sous le titre assez déconcertant de **The Dynasts**, il publie ce qu'il appelle: *A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars*. Ce drame se divise en trois parties dont nous n'avons encore que la première, et il comprendra dix-neuf actes et cent trente scènes. C'est assez dire que l'auteur n'a, jusqu'à nouvel ordre, aucune intention de le faire représenter sur l'un quelconque de nos théâtres actuels. Mais, s'est-on demandé, puisque, Mr. Thomas Hardy s'adresse de toute évidence au lecteur et non au spectateur, pourquoi a-t-il adopté, pour sa gigantesque conception, la forme dramatique et pourquoi fait-il parler ses personnages en vers? Et immédiatement, sans attendre la fin de l'œuvre, on a vivement critiqué l'auteur assez téméraire pour s'écarter des sentiers battus; on lui a vraiment dénié le droit de chercher, d'inaugurer un moyen nouveau d'expression. Sans doute, on éprouve un certain étonnement devant la conception et la réalisation, encore incomplète, de ce poème épique; de prime abord, on est tenté, il faut l'avouer, de railler et de condamner. Mais, à la réflexion, le vaste plan de Mr. Thomas Hardy en impose à l'esprit et l'on s'habitue à la forme qu'il a choisie: toutefois, il est trop tôt pour exprimer une opinion. Devant une œuvre aussi hardie et aussi nouvelle, on ne peut décemment risquer de jugement à la légère et nous attendons les deux autres parties du drame, pour dire toute notre pensée sur la courageuse entreprise de Mr. Thomas Hardy.

The Something that Infects the World.

THE task that Mr. Thomas Hardy has set himself in "The Dynasts" is one which at first sight is apt to arouse feelings of amazement and dismay. A drama in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes appears incredible and impossible. When further we discover, on glancing at the First Part—the only part yet published—that there are more than seventy speaking characters, we begin to imagine that the making of many books has disturbed Mr. Hardy's mental balance. And all these sentiments are aroused because of the use of that word "drama" in the title. While we can conceive the dramatic in any art, convention has, by the ties of association, linked the drama to the stage. That this is an error—that the dramatic form is an admirable vehicle for literary expression—is proved conclusively by the use which Mr. Thomas Hardy has made of it in "The Dynasts."

Some critics have averred that to declare a drama as being not for the stage is to make an announcement whose subject and predicate cancel each other. The question seems to be an important matter of terminology. Compositions cast in this shape were, without doubt, originally written for the stage only, and, as a consequence, their nomenclature of "act," "scene," and the like was drawn directly from the vehicle of representation. But, in the course of time, such a shape would reveal itself to be an eminently readable one; moreover, by dispensing with the theatre altogether, a freedom of treatment was attainable in this form that was denied where the material possibilities of stagery had to be rigorously remembered. With the careless mechanism of human speech, the technicalities of practical mumming were retained in these productions when they had ceased to be concerned with the stage at all.

With his suggestion as to "whether mental performance alone may not eventually be the fate of all drama other than that of contemporary or frivolous life" I have no concern at present; but when we recall the fact that the plays of Shakespeare have never been acted except in a peptonised or bowdlerised form since the days of Elizabeth, it seems more than likely that Mr. Hardy has guessed the future use of the drama. The play itself deals with the great wars waged by Napoleon the First against Europe—that "great historical calamity, or clash of peoples, artificially brought about some hundred years ago." Composed as it is of six acts and thirty-six scenes, chaotic in its construction, it is seemingly a literary panorama. We range far and wide with the author, from a ridge in Wessex to Ulm, from London to Ferrol, from Boulogne to Cape Trafalgar, and as each scene comes up over the horizon numberless characters pass upon the stage, walking or talking, fighting or dying, doing everything without purpose, unconsciously, irresponsibly. But through all this network of scenes and acts one clear thought runs—one principle to inculcate which Mr. Hardy seems to have written the play. It is a clear and unadulterated doctrine of fatalism. Strive man as he may, he cannot escape the event. Let him plot and plan, let him pour out a nation's wealth like water, let him make combinations intricate and marvellous, let him drench the land and sea with human blood, thinking to accomplish a determined and definite purpose, and lo! his combinations fail, and his expenditure of blood and money does not alter the slow and measured tread of Time down the Path of Fate. In the forescene in the "Overworld" the Phantom Intelligences—for despite his anthropomorphic point of view the author has resource to the spirit world—set forth this doctrine.

Shade of the Earth:

> What of the Immanent Will and its designs?

Spirit of the Years:

> It works unconsciously, as heretofore,
> Eternal artistries in Circumstance,
> Whose patterns, wrought by rapt, æsthetic rote,
> Seem in themselves its single listless aim,
> And not their consequence.

Chorus of the Pities (aerial music):

> Still thus? Still thus?
> Ever unconscious!
> An automatic sense
> Unweeting why or whence?
> Then be the inevitable, as of old,
> Although that So it be we dare not hold.

Spirit of the Years:

> Hold what you list, fond, unbelieving Sprites,
> You cannot swerve the pulsion of the Byes,
> Which, thinking on, yet weighing not Its thought,
> Unchecks Its clock-like laws.

The working of these clockwork laws, for which what Matthew Arnold called the "something that infects the world" is responsible, and their effect on man is set forth in the play. Napoleon has written to King George the Third proposing a peace, and, at the instance of Pitt, a non-committal reply has been sent. For Pitt is wasting his life and energies in forming a huge combination of Europe against her scourge. Freely British gold has been spent, and the vast coalition of Russia, Austria, and Prussia is almost ready to pour westwards over the Rhine. Napoleon's reply to the coalition is the camp at Boulogne and the threatened invasion of England. Both Napoleon and Pitt are trying to make the world wag according to their handling. Napoleon only asks for 24 hours' command of the Channel, and has sent Villeneuve to the West Indies with the French fleet to draw off Nelson, with orders to double back to the Channel as speedily as may be. Pitt only requires the armies of the Coalition to march, to overpower France with their numbers and their strength. England is in an uproar at the prospect of invasion; Napoleon waits restlessly at Boulogne for his telegraphs to warn him of the coming Villeneuve. But Villeneuve's ships fail him; he cannot reach the Channel, and has to put in at Cadiz. Delayed in "his knock at George's door," Napoleon breaks up the camp at Boulogne, and marches with incredible swiftness against the advancing Coalition, first sending word to Villeneuve to sail for Italy. One Austrian army is beaten at Ulm, and the Austro-Russian army is defeated at Austerlitz, while Prussia does not move. Villeneuve sails from Cadiz, and French pretensions on the sea are swept out of existence by Nelson at Trafalgar. Thus do the carefully-laid schemes of Pitt and Napoleon come to naught. The vast combination of Europe against France is destroyed at Austerlitz; the possibility of striking a blow at England is frustrated for ever at Trafalgar. It is Pitt's death-blow; ever after Austerlitz, Napoleon dare not allow the news of Trafalgar to reach France.

Such is this wonderful drama of fate. I cannot enter into an account of the scenes, many of strange artistic strength and beauty. Perhaps the best are those that deal with Wessex and the Wessex peasants awaiting the expected invasion. In the death of Pitt and the Battle of Trafalgar the author follows conventional models, with effect in the latter case, but unsuccessfully in the former. However, some of us may cavil at the Mr. Hardy's point of view, we must all hope that, though the publication of the second and third parts of the drama is not guaranteed, we shall be able eventually to read the conclusion of this deeply-interesting literary experiment.

LADBROKE BLACK.

* "The Dynasts; A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars." In three parts, nineteen acts, and 130 scenes. Part I. By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan and Co., 4s. 6d.)

having done something quite regular, and wishes to be regarded as having indulged in a "caprice." This is rather like Lydia Languish, who doated on the contraband "Beverley" but rejected the honourable addresses of Jack Absolute. Mr. Hardy, however, shall think what he pleases of his play. For our part we have so sincere an admiration for it that we are still, as he says, "dying to see the show."

The Times. Feb 19 1904

CORRESPONDENCE.

"THE DYNASTS": A POSTSCRIPT.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Your critic has humorously conducted his discourse away from his original charge against "The Dynasts" into the quaint and unexpected channel of real performance by means of fantoccini, Chinese shadows, and other startling apparatus. This is highly creditable to his ingenious mind; yet we must remember that the whole fabric of his vision arose only out of his altruistic desire to provide me with a means of escape from what he holds to be an untenable position. But I still absolutely deny it to be such, though I may seem ungrateful. I think I have shown that an attempt to write a spectacular poem (if he will allow me to use the expression for want of a better), more or less resembling a stage-play, though not one, has full artistic justification and is not "false in principle," as he stated. He naturally continues to think the other way; and there I fear the matter must remain.

But the truth seems to be—if I may say a final word here on a point outside the immediate discussion—that the real offence of "The Dynasts" lies, not in its form as such, but in the philosophy which gave rise to the form. This is revealed by symptoms in various quarters, even (if I am not mistaken) by your critic's own faint tendency to harden his heart against the "Immanent Will." Worthy British Philistia, unlike that ancient Athens it professes to admire, not only does not ask for a new thing, but even shies at that which merely appears at first sight to be a new thing. As with a certain King, the reverse of worthy, in the case of another play, some people ask, "Have you read the argument? Is there no offence in't?" There can hardly be, assuredly, on a fair examination. The philosophy of "The Dynasts," under various titles and phases, is almost as old as civilization. Its fundamental principle, under the name of Predestination, was preached by St. Paul. "Being predestinated"—says the author of the Epistle to the Ephesians, "Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own Will"; and much more to the same effect, the only difference being that externality is assumed by the Apostle rather than immanence. It has run through the history of the Christian Church ever since. St. Augustine held it vaguely, Calvin held it fiercely, and, if our English Church and its Nonconformist contemporaries have now almost abandoned it to our men of science (among whom determinism is a commonplace), it was formerly taught by Evangelical divines of the finest character and conduct. I should own in fairness that I think this has been shrewdly recognized in some quarters whose orthodoxy is unimpeachable, where the philosophy of "The Dynasts" has been handled as sanely and as calmly as I could wish.

Nevertheless, as was said in the Preface, I have used the philosophy as a plausible theory only. Though, for that matter, I am convinced that, whether we uphold this or any other conjecture on the cause of things, men's lives and actions will be little affected thereby, these being less dependent on abstract reasonings than on the involuntary inter-social emotions, which would more probably be strengthened than weakened by a sense that humanity and other animal life (roughly, though not accurately, definable as puppetry) forms the conscious extremity of a pervading urgence, or will.

Your obedient servant,

Max Gate, Dorset, Feb. 16. THOMAS HARDY.

Friday Post January 15 1904.

I see that Mr. Thomas Hardy has just completed a play in no less than nineteen acts and thirty scenes! I have only one remark to make on this, and that is—"Crikey!"

* * * *

AUTHORS' MISTAKES

To the Editor of THE OUTLOOK (Jan 23. 1904.)

May I draw attention to Mr. Hardy's "The Dynasts"?

W. E.

THE ATHENÆUM

Nº 3978, JAN. 23, 1904

DRAMA

The Dynasts: a Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. By Thomas Hardy. Part I. (Macmillan & Co.)

SIGNS have not been wanting that Mr. Hardy, dissatisfied with the medium in which he won his fame, covets laurels other than those of the novelist. His latest work constitutes an attempt to combine historic chronicle with poetic drama, and to supply a series of animated tableaux of the wars and preparations of Bonaparte from the menaced invasion of England to the setting of the Napoleonic star at Waterloo. Of this huge scheme, to which are to be dedicated nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes, a single portion—occupying six acts and carrying the action to the battle of Austerlitz and its consequences, including the death of Pitt—now appears. A second portion will end in 1811 with the defeat of Soult at Albuera; while a third will show the restoration of peace among the nations. Room exists for doubt whether the inception of an idea of this magnitude is not of interest more general and widespread than its execution. In some respects the scheme is not altogether novel. 'The Dynasts' links itself on one side with the drama of Æschylus and his successors, and on another with the chronicle plays of Shakspeare. Especially close, as is pointed out in the preface, is the connexion with the Hellenic drama, in that whatever is not explicit in the fable is assumed to exist in the minds of the public. While, however, the Greek tragedians confine themselves in a trilogy to the development of a single theme, Mr. Hardy's work passes from country to country, hopping—let it be said without irreverence—from Weymouth to Boulogne, and from Ulm to Trafalgar. In this respect it comes, of course, nearest to the historical plays of Shakspeare, an imitation of these being suggested throughout.

In adopting his new method Mr. Hardy forfeits much—it may even be said most—that has hitherto contributed to his success. The atmosphere of Wessex is still maintained, and the opening portion of the play is to some extent a development of 'The Trumpet-Major,' issued a score years ago, which does not rank as one of Mr. Hardy's best works of fiction. He foregoes, however, all feminine interest and influence—at least so far as the present portion is concerned, though such may, perhaps, be obtained when in a subsequent instalment he has to depict the unparalleled sorrows of Queen Louisa. There is no character even like the Anne Garland of 'The Trumpet-Major.' Queen Charlotte, the English princesses, Lady Caroline Lamb, seven Milanese young ladies, and the princesses of Joséphine's Court are mutes; and Joséphine herself and Lady Hester Stanhope are scarcely more than lay figures. Such attempt at characterization as is permitted is but slight; and though some care is taken with personages such as Napoleon himself, George III., Pitt, Nelson, Hardy, and Villeneuve, the result is seldom more than the production of a thumb-nail sketch.

An abandonment of a method by means of which Mr. Hardy has reached something like supremacy needs more justification than can be supplied. Whatever Mr. Hardy says demands and repays attention. We are not of those, moreover, who would restrict a man's efforts to one line, however brilliant the success achieved in it. Were this done the author of the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel' might never have written 'Redgauntlet' or 'Rob Roy.' But the change in Mr. Hardy is in the wrong direction. His gifts are not in any marked sense poetical. Of lyrical fervour he shows no trace. In the weightier passages he is generally crabbed, and in the lighter uninspired, while certain scenes can scarcely be acquitted of bathos. Shakspeare, in presenting the debates of princes and councillors, employs language which is worthy of the occasion, often dignified and sometimes heroic. We do not expect from a representative of a corrupt English borough the language of a Percy or a Prince Hal. To convey in verse of marvellous blankness a debate in the House of Commons, in which participate Pitt, Sheridan, Windham, Whitbread, Tierney, Fox, Fuller, and Bathurst, is, however, work for inferior hands, and not for the author of 'Far from the Madding Crowd' and 'The Woodlanders.'

Action and comment are enshrined in a species of lyrical utterance of what are called "Phantom Intelligences." The purpose and mission of these are explained at some length. Their most obvious function is to serve as a species of chorus. "Their doctrines," says Mr. Hardy, "are but tentative, and are advanced with but little eye to a systematized philosophy warranted to lift the 'burthen of the mystery' of this unintelligible world." A purpose these beings serve is as mouthpieces for the species of revolt with which the mind of the writer is charged. One group only, that of the Pities, "approximates to the 'Universal Sympathy of human nature—the spectator idealized,'" as, after Schlegel, Mr. Hardy calls this classical chorus. The employment of It instead of He in allusion to the "First or Fundamental Energy" is justified as a necessary and logical consequence of the long abandonment by thinkers of the anthropomorphic conception of the same. Here, one would suppose, is a chance for the author to display the lyrical gifts he cultivates. Mystery and speculation there are in abundance, and we think of Goethe and the second part of 'Faust,' and of other works which in Tudor times would have been characterized as metaphysical. In no case, however—not in the Spirit or Chorus of the Years, of the Pities, of Rumour, in the Spirits Sinister and Ironic, Spirit Messengers, Recording Angels, or the Shade of the Earth—do we find anything that reconciles us to the choice of method, or greatly inspires or delights us. In intelligibility and in pessimism the utterance of the Spirit of the Years is dominant:—

> .....in the Foretime, even to the germ of Being,
> Nothing appears of shape to indicate
> That cognizance has marshalled things terrene,
> Or will (such is my thinking) in my span.
> Rather they show that, like a knitter drowsed,
> Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness,
> The Will has woven with an absent heed
> Since life first was; and ever will so weave.

With a recollection of the French definition of life as a comedy to those who think, a tragedy to those who feel, the Spirit Ironic corrects to "comedy" the phrase "terrestrial tragedy," used by the Spirit of the Pities to qualify the contests between France and opposing Europe. The Spirit Sinister, meanwhile, is scarcely more than a species of modern Puck, declaring that

> Those things they best please me
> That befal preposterously.

The nearest approach to poetry we find in the rousing boatman's song after Trafalgar and the description of the state of affairs given in recitation from a book by the Recording Angel. In this the rhythmical effect is impressive, as is the recurrent rhyme at the end of each quatrain. The "the" in l. 12 is worse than superfluous:—

> Now mellow-eyed Peace is made captive,
> And Vengeance is chartered
> To deal forth its dooms on the Peoples
> With sword and with spear.
> Men's musings are busy with forecasts
> Of musters and battle,
> And visions of shock and disaster
> Rise red on the year.
> The easternmost ruler sits wistful,
> And tense he to midward;
> The King to the west mans his borders
> In front and in the rear.
> While one they eye, flushed from his crowning,
> Ranks legions around him
> To shake the enisled neighbour nation
> And close her career!

A play the characters in which number tens of thousands, and in which supernumeraries are counted by regiments and armies, is obviously not intended to be acted. Mr. Hardy suggests as a conceivable compromise "a monotonic delivery of speeches with dreamy conventional gestures, something in the manner traditionally maintained by the old Christmas mummers." The idea that anything of the kind will ever be attempted may be dismissed.

After the coronation of Napoleon in Milan Cathedral, Act I. sc. vi., the Spirit of the Pities demands—

> What is the creed that these rich rites disclose?

And receives from the Spirit of the Years the answer—

> A local thing called Christianity.

(continued next page)

George III. speaks, Act IV. sc. i., to Pitt of Napoleon as

> This wicked bombardier of dynasties
> That rule by right Divine—

a characteristic touch.

Some of the verses have a quasi-Gilbertian flavour. A Chorus of Ironic Spirits says or sings—

> A pertinent query, in truth!—
> But spoil not the sport by your ruth:
> 'Tis enough to make half
> Yonder zodiac laugh
> When rulers begin to allude
> To their lack of ambition,
> And strong opposition
> To all but the general good!

Forms such as "navarchy," "puppetry," and "bombastry" are met with, and much of the language is stiffly brocaded. In negatives Mr. Hardy is venturesome, introducing such words as "incognizance," "inexist," "uncurse," and "unknow."

The work, so far as it has gone, may be read with interest and admiration for Mr. Hardy's spacious sense of history. We trust, however, that, when his present scheme is finished, the author will recur to that field of Wessex prose in which a few touches here show that his mastery is unrivalled.

Mercure de France.
(April. 1904) Paris

Mr. Thomas Hardy nous est beaucoup connu comme romancier; nous avons lu ses romans et ses nouvelles, en tout dix-sept volumes; il nous est connu aussi un peu comme poète et nous avons lu ses deux volumes de vers: *Wessex Poems and other verses* et *Poems of the Past and the Present*; les lecteurs français ont admiré, dans des traductions, *Tess d'Urberville*, *Jude l'Obscur* et *Barbara* (*Far from the Madding Crowd*). En Angleterre, Mr. Thomas Hardy est proclamé par certains le plus grand écrivain anglais actuel, et ils le placent même au-dessus de George Meredith. Bref, Mr. Thomas Hardy est, et cela légitimement, admiré et respecté de tous. Mais il vient de causer à tous une surprise. Sous le titre assez déconcertant de **The Dynasts**, il publie ce qu'il appelle: *A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars*. Ce drame se divise en trois parties dont nous n'avons encore que la première, et il comprendra dix-neuf actes et cent trente scènes. C'est assez dire que l'auteur n'a, jusqu'à nouvel ordre, aucune intention de le faire représenter sur l'un quelconque de nos théâtres actuels. Mais, s'est-on demandé, puisque, Mr. Thomas Hardy s'adresse de toute évidence au lecteur et non au spectateur, pourquoi a-t-il adopté, pour sa gigantesque conception, la forme dramatique et pourquoi fait-il parler ses personnages en vers? Et immédiatement, sans attendre la fin de l'œuvre, on a vivement critiqué l'auteur assez téméraire pour s'écarter des sentiers battus; on lui a vraiment dénié le droit de chercher, d'inaugurer un moyen nouveau d'expression. Sans doute, on éprouve un certain étonnement devant la conception et la réalisation, encore incomplète, de ce poème épique; de prime abord, on est tenté, il faut l'avouer, de railler et de condamner. Mais, à la réflexion, le vaste plan de Mr. Thomas Hardy en impose à l'esprit et l'on s'habitue à la forme qu'il a choisie: toutefois, il est trop tôt pour exprimer une opinion. Devant une œuvre aussi hardie et aussi nouvelle, on ne peut décemment risquer de jugement à la légère et nous attendons les deux autres parties du drame, pour dire toute notre pensée sur la courageuse entreprise de Mr. Thomas Hardy.

The Something that Infects the World.

THE task that Mr. Thomas Hardy has set himself in "The Dynasts" is one which at first sight is apt to arouse feelings of amazement and dismay. A drama in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes appears incredible and impossible. When further we discover, on glancing at the First Part—the only part yet published—that there are more than seventy speaking characters, we begin to imagine that the making of many books has disturbed Mr. Hardy's mental balance. And all these sentiments are aroused because of the use of that word "drama" in the title. While we can conceive the dramatic in any art, convention has, by the ties of association, linked the drama to the stage. That this is an error—that the dramatic form is an admirable vehicle for literary expression—is proved conclusively by the use which Mr. Thomas Hardy has made of it in "The Dynasts."

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With his suggestion as to "whether mental performance alone may not eventually be the fate of all drama other than that of contemporary or frivolous life" I have no concern at present; but when we recall the fact that the plays of Shakespeare have never been acted except in a peptonised or bowdlerised form since the days of Elizabeth, it seems more than likely that Mr. Hardy has guessed the future use of the drama. The play itself deals with the great wars waged by Napoleon the First against Europe—that "great historical calamity, or clash of peoples, artificially brought about some hundred years ago." Composed as it is of six acts and thirty-six scenes, chaotic in its construction, it is seemingly a literary panorama. We range far and wide with the author, from a ridge in Wessex to Ulm, from London to Ferrol, from Boulogne to Cape Trafalgar, and as each scene comes up over the horizon numberless characters pass upon the stage, walking or talking, fighting or dying, doing everything without purpose, unconsciously, irresponsibly. But through all this network of scenes and acts one clear thought runs—one principle to inculcate which Mr. Hardy seems to have written the play. It is a clear and unadulterated doctrine of fatalism. Strive man as he may, he cannot escape the event. Let him plot and plan, let him pour out a nation's wealth like water, let him make combinations intricate and marvellous, let him drench the land and sea with human blood, thinking to accomplish a determined and definite purpose, and lo! his combinations fail, and his expenditure of blood and money does not alter the slow and measured tread of Time down the Path of Fate. In the forescene in the "Overworld" the Phantom Intelligences—for despite his anthropomorphic point of view the author has resource to the spirit world—set forth this doctrine.

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LADBROKE BLACK.

* "The Dynasts; A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars." In three parts, nineteen acts, and 130 scenes. Part I. By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan and Co., 4s. 6d.)

Academy Jan 23. 1904.

A Vast Venture

The Dynasts: A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. In Three Parts, Nineteen Acts, and One Hundred and Thirty Scenes. By Thomas Hardy. Part First. (Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.)

The astonishing title which we reproduce sufficiently indicates the ambitious and vast (there is no other word but "vast") scope of Mr. Hardy's latest venture in the regions of poetry. It is a great canvas upon which he seeks to unroll, after the fashion of a panorama, the whole drama of the Napoleonic wars. And this volume, reaching from the attempted invasion of England which ended in Trafalgar to the close of Napoleon's supreme battle—Austerlitz—is but the first instalment of it. With a project thus immense before him, we can well understand why Mr. Hardy has so long neglected novel-writing. The two were incompatible. A Shakespeare, a Dante, would have his entire powers engrossed by a scheme of such spaciousness. We understand, and regret it. Mr. Hardy's chief contentions we more or less admit. We believe that the time is come when the poetic drama should develop into a distinct species from the stage-drama, should frankly appeal to the reader rather than the spectator, the closet rather than the boards; we believe that in this way it could put forth potentialities scarce recognised as a purely literary form. We believe also that such a theme as the Napoleonic wars might furnish a grandiosely dramatic subject for such a work; a theme which should unite dramatic situation with no less than epical spaciousness. But—there is a but.

It would demand a poet of the largest power, the most uncompromising individuality, with the most practised and triumphant executive gift. Here it is Mr. Hardy fails. We can discern in him a great conception, an epical idea, which commands our respect. If it were worked out in that medium of the novel wherein he is master, we might have an imposing and enthralling trilogy of novels. Assuredly he has shown himself, by his previous verse, not without innate and authentic poetic gift. But he has not had the lifelong intimacy with the poet's craft which alone could confer on him the flexibility and dexterity, the range and ease of executive accomplishment demanded by so colossal an achievement as that on which he has adventured. In plan he has essayed originality most daringly. To extreme dramatic realism he has added abstract personifications which recall the most sculpturesque Greek tragedy, and are in fact (it should seem) designed to fulfil the functions of the Greek chorus. But the two elements do not blend. These personifications are sometimes incongruously aloof, in their dignity, from the every-dayness of the dialogue which surrounds them; sometimes, in the realism of their speech, equally incongruous with the dignity of their own elemental abstraction. And again, while the whole poetic majesty of the drama resides in the historic issues, the instinct of the novelist has been unable to resist the temptation of a domestic sub-plot, which complicates and intensifies the *bizarre* effect of the whole. Lastly, the execution falls fatally short of inspiration. While there are numerous passages which rise to the level of a poetised rhetoric, not unworthy of the subject-matter, and occasional passages which exhibit Mr. Hardy's gift of romantic description, as a whole the dialogue is the prose of the novelist cut into lengths. Nay, it is a fact that Mr. Hardy is vastly more poetic as a novelist using his accustomed vehicle of prose. We can only say, with a sigh, that we would give many such dramas for one "Return of the Native."

THE ERA

SATURDAY, JANUARY 16, 1904.

MR. HARDY'S HISTORY.

All lovers of the drama will agree that, in choosing the dramatic form for his picture of the great struggle between England and France which culminated in the battle of Waterloo, Mr Thomas Hardy has paid the stage a graceful compliment. "*The Dynasts*," says the author, "is a play intended simply for mental performance, and not for the stage. Some critics," he continues "have averred that to declare a drama as being not for the stage is to make an announcement whose subject and predicate cancel each other. To say that a writing in play-shape is not to be played is merely another way of stating that such writing has been done in a form for which there chances to be no brief definition, save one already in use for works that it superficially but not entirely resembles."

It is a common error to imagine that there is some peculiar trick or knack in writing for the stage—a kind of secret recipe which is only possessed by experts. This is really the case only so far as regards the cheaper and more mechanical forms of the drama. The emptier a play is of real dramatic interest the more artful must the author be in making up the deficiency by mechanical dexterity. The fault of the literary dramatists has ever been that they have written plays which were wanting in all the dramatic excellences; and finding them fall flat, have turned their backs on playwriting with the growl that the playgoing public have no appetite for high-class work.

What *The Dynasts* is deficient in is Form. It is the fashion, nowadays, to sneer at Form; but those laugh best who laugh last; and the eventual quiet extinction of all formless works intended for the stage, however cleverly they may be written, leaves the great principle firm and unaltered. What is the essence of Mr Hardy's theme? The conflict between Pitt as representing England and Napoleon as embodying France. An excellent "notion" indeed, had Mr Hardy understood the elements of dramatic writing as Shakespeare and Goethe understood them. It is the dramatist's duty to keep a tight hold on his principal characters, and give us, not the mere husk of their sayings and doings, but a sort of essence of individual. Mr Hardy treats his personages with a stolid unimaginative literality which is the exact opposite of the way in which Shakespeare paints—say, Antony and Octavius. Here, for instance, are a few lines from a speech by Sheridan in the House of Commons, as given in *The Dynasts*:—

"In Ireland, where the personal influence
Of the right honourable gentleman
Particularly prevails, *eleven* men
Have been amassed."

As for Pitt's speech in reply it is as tame and dull as Parliamentary orations usually are. This is in the first act; and we lose sight of Pitt entirely until the fourth, when "having a wasted look," he confers with the King, who commences.

"Yes, yes, I grasp your reasons, Mr Pitt,
And grant you audience gladly."

In the whole interview between the King and Pitt there is hardly an instance of elevation above the commonplace. It is to no purpose to tell us that it can be proved that Pitt, in such and such circumstances, *was* commonplace. Even if this were correct, the duty of the dramatist is not to be true in fact, but true in essence. As a matter of fact, indeed, Pitt was essentially dramatic. What can be better than his order to roll up the map of Europe after the battle of Austerlitz, or his dying ejaculation with reference to his country? It was Mr Hardy's duty as a dramatist to have given us the very soul of Pitt, with the statesman's patriotism, eloquence, and pride idealised to the nth power. Napoleon fares a little better at Mr Hardy's hands—not that the writer exhausts the possibilities of Bonaparte, but because Napoleon, as a prosaic egoist, had a much smaller soul than Pitt's. But Mr Hardy's fault of formlessness is more fatal than anything else to the effect of *The Dynasts* as a drama. Why drag in Nelson, with the Battle of Trafalgar and the death scene in the cockpit of the Victory, in the middle of the struggle between Pitt and Napoleon? Mr Hardy should have noticed how adroitly Shakespeare slurs over the Pompey business in *Antony and Cleopatra* and sticks to the main issue—the fight to the death between Octavius and his rival.

Thus and thus has the theory of the divorce between literature and the stage been engendered. Men who understand how to write novels or poems but fail to appreciate the essentials for dramatic writing attempt the latter, and, failing, join the ranks of the contemners and despisers of the drama. Never has "literary merit" had more chances given it on the stage than recently; indeed, we may well claim that it has been pampered and propped up rather than slighted by our London entrepreneurs. Most of Mr Stephen Phillips's plays are by no means strong as dramas, and had it not been for the enterprise and generosity of our managers who have given these pieces the support of their personal influence and vogue and of most artistic and elaborate mounting, the plays would probably have been far less successful than they have been on the stage. Because the dramatic instinct, unaided by literature, can produce favourable results, it is imagined, quite wrongly, that literature is sufficient for entertainments of the stage without the union with it of the dramatic instinct. The idea that a drama can read dramatically and act undramatically is equally absurd. To an intelligent reader, who can by his imagination supply stage accessories, the perusal of a play has much the same effect as witnessing its performance; and in reading *The Dynasts* we have been just as much vexed by Mr Hardy's discursiveness as we should have been in seeing it played. The author, in a half-apologetic preface, says that in devising his "chronicle-piece, no attempt has been made to create that completely organic structure of action and closely-webbed development of character and motive which are demanded in a drama strictly self-contained." This, to say the least, was a pity; for there is evidence in the speeches of the Spirits whom Mr Hardy introduces that he is quite capable of taking grand, massed views of history, and of expressing his ideas in real poetry. But a work in dramatic form, ungoverned by the dramatic instinct and unelevated by strong imagination, must inevitably be ineffectual.

The Daily Paper
Feb 3. 1904

THE BOOK OF THE DAY.

Mr. Thomas Hardy's New Play.*

*"The Dynasts: Drama of the Napoleonic Wars, in Three Parts, Nineteen Acts, and One Hundred and Thirty Scenes." By Thomas Hardy. London, Macmillan and Co., 1904.

Reviewed by

WILLIAM ARCHER.

Mr. Thomas Hardy stands, as it seems to me, second to none among the creative artists of our time. Great as is his reputation, I do not think it equal to his deserts. The humour, the power, the poetic charm of his fiction are more or less appreciated; not so its philosophic depth. He is one of the few Englishmen who not only possess a capacity for general ideas, but can give them free and vital embodiment in art. Assuredly he is a great poet; and from among his titles to be so considered, I do not (as many would) except his volumes of verse. His work in metrical form is apt to be uncouth and sometimes a little helpless; but it is full of originality, full of imagination, full of the essentials of poetry. He is a voice, not an echo, in verse no less than in prose.

So much it seemed well to premise before saying that his new epic drama, "The Dynasts," is a remarkable, but to my thinking scarcely a successful experiment. Its inspiration is not only grandiose, but truly sublime; its form is unhappily chosen. What Mr. Hardy here attempts, someone, some day, will achieve; while "The Dynasts" will rank in English literature, not in its own right, so to speak, but as a document in the mental history of the author of "The Woodlanders" and "Jude the Obscure." It is eminently worth reading; it contains many memorable passages; but it is like a statue carved with a jack-knife instead of a chisel. There is a glaring disparity between instrument and material.

What is the idea? It is nothing less than the panoramic or spectacular presentment of the salient moments in that hugest of historic dramas, the ten years' struggle that began with the rupture of the Peace of Amiens and ended at Waterloo. All Europe was in those days the Theatre of War, in a quite peculiar sense. From Cape Clear to Moscow, from Sicily to the Norwegian fiords, it may be considered as a gigantic stage crowded with picturesque and striking characters, whose physiognomy, at a thousand critical junctures, is clearly visible to us in the memoirs and other records of the time. And all these personages, with all they represent, are inextricably interwoven in one great web of destiny, whose filaments radiate from, and revert to, the central figure of Napoleon Bonaparte. Every scene in the drama bears some relation to him, and is thus co-ordinated in a real, though infinitely complex, unity. How fascinating the idea, then, of visualising the typical passages of this drama, throwing the limelight on point after point of the world-stage, and making scene after scene leap out into sudden and palpable actuality! Leaving the historian to seek out causes and trace connections, the poet would concentrate his effort on evoking the picturesque, the dramatic, the psychological content of each successive episode, selected, of course, under the guidance of some historical or philosophic idea that should more or less visibly inform the whole. The result would be a mosaic of seemingly detached scenes, forming in their combined effect a spectacular epic unprecedented in style or scale, and impressive in proportion to the genius infused into it.

This, or something like this, was the idea from which Mr. Hardy set forth. But he complicated it from the outset by determining to visualize not only the episodes of the drama, but the philosophic idea running through them. To this end he created a chorus of Phantom Intelligences—the Spirit of the Years, the Spirit of the Pities, a Spirit Sinister, a Spirit Ironic, and so forth—who watch, comment on, and sometimes take active part in, the terrestrial happenings. That the drama should be heralded by what Goethe calls a "Prologue in Heaven" and Mr. Hardy a "Fore-Scene" in the "Over World," is natural enough; but Mr. Hardy errs, it seems to me, in keeping his supernal Intelligences constantly in the foreground. Having once placed them in their private box, so to speak, he should have left them there, and made them, like well-behaved spectators, reserve their criticisms for the inter-acts. As it is, their position is wholly anomalous. They are partly spectators, partly wire-pullers, partly lecturers: and as their comments resolve themselves into a confession that they don't in the least understand what is going on, they tend to become monotonous. No more than we human spectators have they any

So did my noble quarry leap
Upon the seething wave:
Then headlong in the cloven deep
Plunged to her ocean grave.

The sea closed o'er her where she sank,
And not a bubbling breath
Told of the hundred souls that drank
The cup of bitter death.
The outer waters were not stirred,
Where crouched beside his gun
The foe that far off thunder heard,
And knew my task was done.

For to one cunning master true,
I serve and never tire.
Man's fingers made me, and I do
The bidding of my sire.
He speeds me o'er the midnight wave:
And on that path untrod,
The slave of His more mighty slave,
I work the will of God.

EDWARD SYDNEY TYLEE.

BOOKS.

MR. HARDY'S DRAMA.*

MR. HARDY has undertaken a drama on what is perhaps the most dramatic subject which the modern world can conceive,—the ferment of Europe under the Napoleonic Wars. He has sought to bring all the many issues of that confused time into the focus of his art, and he therefore provides a multitude of varied characters and a frequent shifting of scene. It is a great intention, and deserves to be judged strictly on the definition of it which he has given us in his preface. It must necessarily be a play rather for the study than the stage. No drama, no series of dramas, on the ordinary model can represent all the details of the panorama, the network of causes, and the wide variety of characters which are essential to his scheme. Stagecraft is a convention some distance removed from actuality, but the convention which Mr. Hardy has chosen is many degrees further from reality than the ordinary illusion of the stage. Again, the unities, which in an elastic form must be present in an acting play, are wholly remote from his conception. Time and space scarcely have their normal significance in the rarefied world of his fancy. The drama which he seeks is not the conflict of personalities familiar to us in ordinary life, but the clash of nations and civilisations and cosmic forces. His intention, in a word, is epic; and it is only for convenience, and to suit the idiosyncrasies of his own genius, that he has used the dramatic form.

The intention is to show the events which shook the world as a kind of puppet-show, behind which moves the force which the author chooses to call the Immanent Will, causeless and incomprehensible. For this purpose there come interludes when all action ceases, and the reader is given a vision of a gaunt and skeleton Europe, seen as if from an infinite height, with the peoples struggling like ants, and a nerve-like network of currents, emanating from the Will, interpenetrating both ants and skeleton. Mr. Hardy attains to a kind of gruesome sublimity in these curious stage directions. The disease of "grandeur," the sense of the littleness and the transience of life, seize the onlooker like a vertigo on high mountains. For a brief moment, to borrow a technical term, a philosophical creed is visualised, and the spectral grips the mind with all the strange vividness of a dream. The philosophy itself is a kind of hard Pyrrhonism, what some people will no doubt call Aeschylean, but which seems to us to be far enough removed from the noble fore-ordination of Greek tragedy. We should be hard pressed to define it. In his preface Mr. Hardy tells us that he has abandoned the masculine pronoun in allusion to the First Energy, since all thinkers have long since given up the anthropomorphic conception of it. From this we gather that Mr. Hardy's Will is something a thousandfold more distant from humanity than the Fate of other poets, since by personifying it they seem to assume that its attributes have at least a far-away cousinship with mortal nature. Other poets, too, have seen that to fail to adopt this wise conviction would be so to divorce the substance of things from their dramatic presentment, so to belittle mortal efforts, that the unreality of it all would become too spectral for art. Human drama, even on Mr. Hardy's theory, demands some illusion in its philosophy as well as in its staging. Sometimes, indeed, there is a hint that Destiny is not adamant. Says the Spirit of Rumour, in appropriately awkward verse:—

> "There may react on things
> Some influence from these, indefinitely,
> And even on That, whose outcome we all are."

But on the whole, the philosophy is consistent in its fatalism:

> "A local thing called Christianity,
> Which the wild dramas of this whirling sphere
> Include, with divers others such, in dim,
> Pathetical, and brief parentheses;
> Beyond whose reach, uninfluenced, unconcerned,
> The systems of the suns go sweeping on
> With all their many-mortaled planet train
> In mathematic roll unceasingly."

Apart from metaphysics, there must be some central mundane idea to give unity to the puppet-show. Mr. Hardy finds this in the duel between England and Napoleon, the real conflict of civilisations and temperaments. "I want nothing on this continent," Mack is told by the Emperor; "The English only are my enemies." And again:—

> "Her rock-rimmed situation walls her off,
> Like a slim, selfish mollusk in its shell,
> From the wide views and fair fraternities
> Which on the mainland we reciprocate."

And so, with these conceptions, mundane and supra-mundane, as a basis, the first part of the great drama down to Austerlitz and the death of Pitt is worked out on the stages of Wessex, London, Paris, Germany, with a vast number of actors, from the protagonists, Napoleon, Nelson, and Pitt, down to nameless Wessex peasants and women of Paris. In one department Mr. Hardy is a master. His peasants, especially his Wessex men, have the true Shakespearian ring. Their humour is like Touchstone's, their talk is racy of the soil and human as life itself. The citizens who crowd around Pitt's coach, the lonely watchers by the beacons on the Wessex heath, the sailormen just come from Trafalgar, are as real as anything Mr. Hardy has done. And this, in the midst of so much spectral life, is the highest praise. Of the great figures, Napoleon is so far only a brooding shadow; but Pitt is alive, and the King and Nelson. The death of the English Premier and the last scene at Trafalgar are fine pieces of drama, and minor scenes, like the attack by Sheridan in the House of Commons, have considerable life and colour. All through the play, even when it sinks to its worst, we are impressed with a certain epic grandeur in the conception; it is in the execution that faults arise. We fear that Mr. Hardy's reach must be held to exceed his grasp; but let us add that the reach is a very great one. The cardinal error seems to us to lie in the philosophy, which is too cold, bloodless, and formal to be adequate to the needs of human life. But even with this limitation we can imagine a great drama, in which a chorus of dignified spirits should proclaim in noble verse a lofty if heartless creed. But the group of spirits, piteous, ironic, and merely didactic, who provide, in the style of a Greek chorus, a running commentary on the action, do not talk in noble numbers, but in the worst jargon of the schools. They conduct their espionage in the spirit of a very young man who has just begun to dabble in metaphysics, and is imperfectly acquainted with the terminology. The result of this constant harping on the Immanent Will in pseudo-scientific terms becomes in the end merely comic. These Personages never speak without expressing a banal thought in the worst verse.

> "Gloomy Villeneuve grows rash, and, darkly brave,
> Leaps to meet war, storm, Nelson—even the grave,"—

is the style of Recording Angel II.; while,—

> "Plunging mid those teeth of treble line
> In jaws of oaken wood
> Held open by the English navarchy
> With suasive breadth and artful industry,
> Would smack of purposeless foolhardihood,"—

is the manner of Recording Angel I. But the low-water mark is reached by the Chorus of the Years in what the author calls "aerial music":— (Turn over)

* *The Dynasts: a Drama of the Napoleonic Wars.* By Thomas Hardy. In Three Parts. Part First. London: Macmillan and Co. [6s. 6d. net.]

clue to the purposes of the "Immanent Will," the "viewless, voiceless Turner of the Wheel." So far as they can see, it appears that

> Like a knitter drowsed,
> Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness,
> The Will has woven with an absent heed
> Since life first was; and ever will so weave.

In short, they give voice to that temperamental pessimism, coloured by studies in German philosophy, with which Mr. Hardy contemplates the universe. Assuredly I am the last to argue that this view of life does not find plausible support in the aimless welter of the Napoleonic wars; but I cannot help feeling that Mr. Hardy rubs it in unnecessarily, and by means of clumsy machinery.

His second and still more serious error is that of casting his dramatic dialogue in such an unwieldy medium, and one so haunted by incongruous associations, as quasi-Elizabethan blank verse. It has almost every possible disadvantage for his purpose. It gives a stodgy and conventional air to scenes which ought, above everything to be alert and real; and it constantly beguiles the dramatist into bombast on the one hand or oaths on the other. Even a poet of great technical accomplishment might strive in vain to steer between this Scylla and Charybdis; and of technical accomplishment in the handling of blank verse Mr. Hardy has little enough. One cannot but wonder what temptation he can have found in the thought of versifying (for example) a debate in Parliament between Sheridan, Pitt, Fox, Windham, etc.—measuring it off in lines like these:—

> In Ireland, where the personal influence of the right honourable gentleman particularly prevails, eleven men have been amassed.

or these:—

> The annals of a century, sir, unshow more flagrant cases of oppressiveness than those this statute works to perpetrate.

(Mr. Hardy, by the way, is very fond of this use of "un" and "in"—"to unshow" for "not to show," "to exist" for "not to exist." It is surely an invention of his own, and not a laudable one.) How hard it is to imagine George III. saying to Pitt:—

> To fear dilemmas horning up ahead is not your wont—

or Napoleon thus addressing the Austrian Generals at Ulm:—

> I tell you frankly that I know not why
> Your master wages this wild war with me.
> I know not what he seeks by such injustice,
> Unless to give me practice in my trade—
> That of a soldier—whereto I was bred:
> Deemed he my craft might slip from me, unplied?
> Let him now own me still a dab therein!

But more remarkable still is Napoleon's method of hailing the Sun of Austerlitz:—

> No, hurry, Lannes,
> Enjoy this sun, that rests its chubby jowl
> Upon the plain, and thrusts its bristling beard
> Across the lowlands' fleecy counterpane.

I wish I could say that these are the only passages in which Mr. Hardy's uncertain sense of verbal fitness has combined with his insufficient command of metrical form to betray him into absurdities.

Yet, with all these drawbacks the book is a remarkable one, and the product of an extraordinary mind. We have here only one-third of the projected work—six acts out of nineteen, thirty-six scenes out of one hundred and thirty. The action extends only from March, 1805, to the death of Pitt in January, 1806. The fifth act is concerned mainly with Trafalgar, the sixth with Austerlitz. the Trafalgar scenes, despite the trammels of the verse, are unquestionably the most successful in the volume, if we except a wholly delightful scene in prose between a knot of Dorsetshire peasants watching on Egdon Heath for the beacon that is to announce the coming of "Boney." There is a great deal of philosophic suggestion, too, in the colloquies of the "Phantom Intelligences," which would be admirable if they were treated as interludes and not jumbled up with the terrestrial action. Everywhere there are the marks of deep thought and vivid imagination. If only the form, both structural and verbal, answered to the grandeur of the idea "The Dynasts" would indeed be a great achievement.

The Daily Mail,

MR. HARDY, POET.

The only dramatic comparison with Mr. Hardy's play, "The Dynasts," with its nineteen acts, must be sought in "Celestial" literature. I do not mean the literature of the spirits and phantoms of which the author writes, but of the Chinese. A Chinese play will ramble on for a week, and clearly Mr. Hardy's panorama might be taken in that way. Mr. Hardy's devotion to poetry in his later years is touching. Like Mr. Meredith, he began his career by writing verse, but he confesses that he destroyed those early efforts. No doubt the reception given to "Jude the Obscure," a remarkable novel, discouraged him greatly, and that is possibly the reason he turned his back on fiction, and is wooing his first love.

St. James's Gazette, Jan 13 1904

"It will be called, in rhetoric and rhyme,
As son to sire succeeds,
A model for the tactics of all time;
'The Great Campaign of Eighteen-hundred-five,'
By millions of mankind not yet alive."

Phrases like "an untactical torpid diplomacy" and "the free trajection of our entities" are impossible in any music, aerial or otherwise. These sinister spirits have indeed led Mr. Hardy into strange deeps. Under their influence he is capable of the very worst lyrics and the most turgid meditations. Only when he gets back to common earth, as in the Trafalgar song of the boatmen, does he approach either true vigour or melody. But though he is at his worst among the spirits, his verse throughout is full of the gravest technical faults. He has a habit of falling into that unpleasing form of blank verse where every line is a complete sentence. As compared with the excellent prose in which his peasants talk, the metrical work is halting, turgid, and singularly lacking in music. The rhythms, even in passages where the thought is admirable, tend to be weak and impoverished, and it is rarely that a single fine line breaks the tortured monotony.

And yet we should hesitate to pronounce the work a failure. The outlines of a great conception rise out of the misty philosophy and awkward rhythms. It is the work of a poet, who, lacking most of the poetic gifts, has, on the one hand, a kind of cosmic imagination, and, on the other, the clearest insight into the humour and pity of humble life. It is the work of a poet, but it is rarely poetry. We can imagine Mr. Hardy writing a drama of Wessex folk of the first quality, but it must not be in verse, for his Muse is too unskilful, and he must refrain from calling up spirits from the vasty deep, for he has no turn for transcendental poetry. Sometimes, indeed, he gets the better of himself, and writes, as if by accident, fine lines, as when Napoleon sees England ruined:—

"Till all her hulks lie sodden in their docks,
And *her grey island eyes* in vain shall seek
One jack of hers upon the ocean plains!"

or when the chaplain on the 'Victory' says of the dead Admiral,—

"He has homed to where
There's no more sea";

or when the London citizen, with a quaintness almost Shakespearian, speaks of Nelson,—

"Who is now sailing shinier seas than ours."

But such lines are oases in very sandy deserts, and it is only when we turn to the Wessex scenes and familiar prose that we recognise the infallible touch of the true artist.

A NAPOLEONIC BIOGRAPH,

"The Dynasts." A drama of the Napoleonic wars, in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes. By Thomas Hardy. Part First. (Macmillan and Co.)

Mr. Hardy has undertaken to treat a colossal subject on a proportionately gigantic scale. The hearts of a feverish and hasty generation which is accustomed to have its drama, like everything else, served up to it in small and highly seasoned mouthfuls, will be only too apt to shrink appalled from an undertaking of such Titanic menace as this drama "in nineteen acts." But the consolatory assurance may be unhesitatingly given that it is by no means so overwhelming or forbidding as would appear from this preliminary category.

The drama is vast in scope, but as varied as it is vast. It is other principle. The world-wide nature of the struggle, and the description could not be bettered. "No attempt," says Mr. Hardy, "has been made to create that completely organic structure of action, and closely-webbed development of character and motive, which are demanded in a drama strictly self-contained. . . . The spectator, in thought, becomes a performer whenever called upon, and cheerfully makes himself the utility-man of the gaps." The work is written in fact on the assumption that the reader (for it is never intended, of course, for actual representation on the boards of any theatre) has sufficient familiarity with the subject to weld together, of his own knowledge, into a connected whole what might otherwise remain a chaotic mass of isolated scenes and fragments. It would be well-nigh impossible, indeed, to treat this colossal subject on any other principle. The world-wide nature of the struggle, and the profundity of the issues involved, has further led the author to introduce among his *dramatis personæ* a group of spirits or abstract principles, who play something the same part as the chorus in a Greek tragedy. They bring the various scenes into touch with general principles, and thus help considerably in the mental unification of the nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes, or such a proportion of them at any rate as are included in this first part of the whole work, which takes the reader as far as Trafalgar, the Austrian capitulation at Ulm, and the death of Pitt.

It is only fair to record that the author expressly tells the reader, in the terms quoted above, that his personal co-operation is required to make "The Dynasts" an intelligible whole. At the same time it is necessary to pass an independent estimate on Mr. Hardy's work as it stands, and the effect is undoubtedly fine. Even the fragmentariness, which is inevitable, is far less noticeable than might have been expected; one feels that though unity and smoothness are impossible in the written work, they were attained in the author's own conception, and he succeeds to a remarkable extent in bringing together his medley of isolated scenes and impressions under a single dominant aspect. As for the scenes themselves, they are full of racy and characteristic passages, and often rise at loftier moments of the action to real heights of eloquence.

It is Wessex which has led Mr. Hardy into the turmoil of the Napoleonic wars; he explains in his preface the different connecting links, and he long ago made a tentative foray into the area of the great struggle in the "Trumpet-Major"; and at the beginning of "The Dynasts" we emerge from a prefatory mist of world-spirits upon a coaching-road on a Wessex hillside. The second scene transports us to the office of the Minister of Marine in Paris, the third to the old House of Commons, the next to the harbour of Boulogne, and so on, with the rapidity and glitter of the successive scenes of a biograph. The menace of invasion is well conveyed time and again in those English rural scenes, and often expressed in fine lines, as, for instance:—

All yesterday the firing at Boulogne
Was like the seven thunders heard in heaven
When the fierce angel spoke. So did he draw
Men's eyes that way, the while his thousand boats
Full-manned, flat-bottomed for the shallowest shore,
Dropped down to west, and crossed our frontage here.
Seen from above they specked the water-shine
As will a flight of swallows towards dim eve,
Descending on a smooth and loitering stream
To seek some eyot's sedge.

There are many examples up and down these pages of the author's genius for characterisation, and many passages rough-hewn in metre, but admirably expressive of personality and convincing in portraiture. It is sincerely to be hoped that the author will fulfil his expressed hope of completing the whole scheme by the addition of two other parts, which will bring the story of the wars down to Waterloo. The present volume is full of finely-conceived snatches of description which bring those palpitating times home to the mind with a reality which it would be difficult to beat. It is possible that a reader with his sense of humour imperfectly under control may find the behaviour of the Spirits occasionally a little trying. The entrance of the Spirit of the Pities, the Spirit of the Years, the Spirit Sinister, and the Spirit Ironic into the gallery of the House of Commons "in the disguise of ordinary strangers" is, for instance, a considerable strain upon the gravity of the most sympathetic. But those who come to mock at such superficial anomalies are uncommonly likely to remain, if not exactly to pray, certainly to admire and enjoy.

D. Mirror 19-1-04

A DEFENCE OF MR. HARDY'S "DYNASTS."

(To the Editor of the *Daily Mirror*.)

I read the review of Mr. Thomas Hardy's new book, "The Dynasts," which appeared in your issue of Friday, with feelings that varied between despair and disgust. Flippant, superficial, incompetent, your reviewer had plumbed in six minutes, or thereabouts, a work upon which a master mind had been engaged for six years.

He dismissed Mr. Hardy's book as a plethoric drama, just as, no doubt, had he been born some twenty-five years earlier, he would have dismissed "The Egost" as a plethoric comedy.

The truth of the matter is—and your critic is hardly a person fit to argue with, for there are none so blind as those that won't or can't see—that Mr. Hardy, seeking a more complete form of expression than the novel, has cast his book into a new dramatic shape; in other words, wedded two incomplete forms, thereby producing a new framework that is miles ahead of the convention used by either our novelists or our dramatists.

This new convention affords a distinct gain in directness, movement, and actuality; and any critic who wishes the novel to stand still or the drama to remain a thing of three or four acts is hardly worthy of attention.

New art creates and demands new criticism. Your writer on Hardy fails to see the one, and is incompetent to formulate the other.

A. K.

THOMAS HARDY AS PANORAMATIST. *cutting from* Saturday Review Jan 30 1904.

EIGHT years ago "Jude the Obscure" was published. Since then Mr. Hardy has given us two or three volumes of poetry, and now a volume of

accompanying cutting from Outlook *of* Jan 16 1904.

Bookman Feb. 1904.

But in one respect "The Dynasts" may, indeed, do pioneering work, by its insistence on the too much forgotten fact that every drama which is not merely the reflection of some social coterie, plays in two worlds, and that unseen powers and personalities have in it legitimate rôles, either as actors or chorus. It is here in this more difficult portion that Mr. Hardy has achieved success—though by his refusal to conform to conventional notions of the spiritual powers he has added to his difficulties a thousandfold. Not only has he dared to bid prosaic readers listen to the watching Pities and Ironic Spirits lamenting over, or mocking at, the weary, petty warfare of men below, but he has aspired to be the poet of the monistic theory. His Monism has something of his own about it. In his statement of it there may be contradiction, but this matters less since it is that of a poet, and thus more thought-stimulating than any statement of any scientist. His "Immanent Will" is not as defined by some dispassionate man of science, but as conceived by a man of deeply emotional nature, who holds his convictions strongly, and deplores their truth. While the Shade of the Earth asks "What of the Immanent Will and Its designs?" the Chorus of the Pities laments in answer, "Ever unconscious." From its non-sentience springs all the anarchy of the world. It can only be perceived in emanations from Itself—most of them terribly sentient, by the way—Wessex rustics, Napoleon, Pitt, poor doddering George III., or the imaginable spirits of the Earth, or the Years, or the Pities. As in a vivid anatomical design, It appears "a brain-like net-work of currents and ejections, twitching, interpenetrating, entangling, and thrusting hither and thither the human forms." Or, emotionally expressed by the Ironic Spirits mocking the Pities,

> "Stand ye apostrophising That
> Which, working all, works but thereat
> Like some sublime fermenting-vat
>
> Heaving throughout its vast content
> With strenuously transmutive bent,
> Though of its aim unsentient?
>
> Could ye have seen Its early deeds,
> Ye would not cry, as one who pleads
> For quarter, when a Europe bleeds!"

We, continue the Ironic Spirits,

> "Saw ravage, growth, diminish, add,
> Or peoples sane or peoples mad,
> In choiceless round of good and bad;
>
> Heard laughters at the ruthless dooms
> Which tortured to the eternal glooms
> Quick, quivering hearts in hecatombs."

Mere watchers, powerless to prevent or urge, they hover apart from the earthly protagonists and the crowd of supers; yet by their coherence of character, their presence at every crisis, brooding over the cockpit of the *Victory*, over Napoleon's bivouac at Austerlitz, and the dying bed of Pitt, these phantom intelligences are the one unifying force in the whole piece. They present the sole dramatic element, and they express themselves always with force and often with beauty. By the overworld portion is "The Dynasts" justified—because there has been admitted something of that potent limitation whose name is Art. A. MACDONELL.

LITERATURE.

THE EPIC OF ENGLAND.*

ONCE on a time I attended a Socialist meeting. It was held in the house of a poet then famous, and a gentleman depicted for us a rosy future in which we should everyone of us be compelled to work, really work "with our 'ands" a certain number of hours every day, and no longer; but added, perhaps out of compliment to his host, that poets would be exempt from this regulation. On that there sprung into view a young man with a small red head and large red ears, and said firily he was not going to stand any such nonsensical exceptions to rules. Why should a fellow who was called a poet not work the same as he, the red-headed one, would have to work? What was the use of poetry? Who wanted it? Not he, certainly. And in our blindness we smiled at this young man; but he was really only rather ahead of the times in his literary point of view. The times have caught him up since then, and it is very possible that having abandoned Socialism, he may even now be exulting over the "slump" in poetry in the literary column of —well, never mind where.

This age, we are told, like the red-headed young man, does not want poetry. If that is true, then this age does not want great conceptions, does not want profound emotions. For when these call for expression —as all essentially human things call for expression— it is poetry alone which can adequately express them. And why? Because language is in itself a rude, imperfect vehicle, and, such as it is, of those who "talk prose" for three score years and ten, there are but few who know how to use it. Of the population in general one must remark with pain that the more words they use the more they deface by misuse. The words men commonly emit in moments of real exaltation are ridiculously far from the truth of what they wish to express. But among simple, natural folk, with a still vigorous vocabulary, emotion will jet out in the form of some strong metaphor: and that is poetry. Poetry can convey by imagery meanings beyond the reach of plain statement and its rhythm is as natural an expression of human emotion as the song of the lark or the nightingale is of the mysterious being of the bird. Moreover, poetry lifts words out of the slough of banality, which is constantly tending to make them hardly more individually expressive than the baa-ing of sheep, and not only fills them with the power of rhythmic music, but re-invests them with their own dignity and meaning.

I say this much of poetry because the critics of Mr. Hardy's drama of *The Dynasts* ask why an admirable master of prose should have abandoned it for poetry, and ask this with the easy confidence of the Hatter when he was asking Alice the riddle which "hadn't got an answer." But since Mr. Hardy has done this, we may be sure there is a reason for it; and that reason is that the conception he has to present is unsuited to the medium of prose. It is too great, too essentially epic. I remember to have seen a meritorious translation of *Paradise Lost* into French prose. There was no fault to be found with it, except that as a

* THE DYNASTS. A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars, in three parts, 19 acts, and 130 scenes. By Thomas Hardy. Part I., 4s. 6d net. London: Macmillan. [In view of the recent controversy on this subject in the *Times*, we think it only fair to Mrs. Woods to mention that this article was in type before the criticism of Mr. Hardy appeared in that paper.—ED. SPEAKER.]

...they seem—as they, but all alive, like real men and women beheld from a great distance.

Pushing ingenuity a step further, one might even defend the likeness of these figures to automata. For

...he has a mastery, rather than a ... has to wrestle—sometimes quite successfully—for his effects. No one, again, will deny that Mr. Hardy is, in the large sense of the word, a dramatist. But his

(Turn over)

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St. James's Gazette, Jan 13 1904

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"Till all her hulks lie
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or when the chaplain on th
Admiral,—

"He h
There's no more sea."

or when the London citizen, w
spearian, speaks of Nelson,—

"Who is now sailing s

But such lines are oases in ve
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we recognise the infallible touc

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A DEFENCE OF
"DYNAS

(To the Editor of the

I read the review of M
new book, "The Dynasts,
your issue of Friday, with
between despair and
superficial, incompetent,
plumbed in six minutes,
work upon which a mas
engaged for six years.

He dismissed Mr. H
plethoric drama, just as,
been born some twenty-fi
would have dismissed "
plethoric comedy.

The truth of the matter
is hardly a person fit to a
are none so blind as those
see—that Mr. Hardy, see
plete form of expression
cast his book into a new
other words, wedded two
thereby producing a new
miles ahead of the conven
our novelists or our dram

This new convention aff
in directness, movement,
any critic who wishes the
or the drama to remain
four acts is hardly worthy

New art creates and dem
Your writer on Hardy fails
is incompetent to formul

A NAPOLEONIC BIOGRAPH,

"The Dynasts." A drama of the Napoleonic wars, in three parts, nineteen

whole it was dull and ridiculous. Those vast shapes, those illimitable scenes could not be conjured up by the means at the disposal of the prose writer. The subject which Mr. Hardy has chosen is the greatest which any writer has treated since Milton, and one of more complexity than "the ways of God to man" as seen by a Puritan theologian. This subject he describes as the "great historical calamity or clash of peoples, artificially brought about some hundred years ago." Later on he says: "The provokingly slight regard paid to English influence and action throughout the struggle by those continental writers who had dealt imaginatively with Napoleon's career seemed always to leave room for a new handling of the theme." And here is the real key-note of *The Dynasts*. It is a handling of a theme which deserved, which needed, handling: the great national drama of England's epic struggle with Napoleon. It is but a few of us who have, like Mr. Hardy himself, been brought into actual touch with the past, have known men who could tell by personal experience of the long agony of the struggle, the pathetically simple heroism of that England of our grandsires. But none of us have the right to forget it. Yet, with that sense of politeness to the captain of the opposing team which Englishmen carry into departments of life where it is little understood, we have been consenting to the flood of French sentiment which has gushed round Napoleon of late years, until we seem to admit a something dubious in the conduct of our forefathers, who succeeded in their opposition to so sacred a being, and a positive crime in their carrying out the unanimous decree pronounced against him by a Europe which had had his sword in her bowels for nigh on a score of years, and was not minded to sacrifice the welfare of millions to a sentiment on behalf of a man who himself had never acted upon any sentiment other than that of *Væ victis*.

It is up to now by an American that the most pregnant word has been spoken on the greatness of England's past in that world-drama. Most people know, even if they have not read, a certain luminous sentence of Captain Mahan's about those "far-off waiting ships" which really held the fate of Europe, while her eyes were fixed on the big battalions gathering for Austerlitz. Yet among English writers more than one must have lifted their eyes to this great national subject, and have hesitated to attempt it on account of its huge difficulties. The chief of these lies in the main element of its grandeur—the fact that the struggle was carried through by the whole obscure mass which is a nation. It cannot be even partially summed up in the history of any single man. The figure of Nelson is indeed the only romantic figure which fills any space in the foreground. Now, the vast circle of the rolling Atlantic, where one foaming mountain only for a moment overtops the others, is a magnificent spectacle, but it must needs fill with perplexity the painter who sits down to reduce it to the terms of art. And a like task is his who would embody that national epic of ours, which yet demands embodiment.

Mr. Hardy has faced this and kindred difficulties, and seen his way to conquer them. In the general plan of his dramatic epic he has shown the highest possible imagination, an imagination of that order which strikes to the inner truth of things as no other faculty of the mind is able to do. The great drama was enacted during long years in all parts of Europe and on the trackless ocean, in hundreds of diverse scenes and by thousands of diverse individuals unknown to each other, yet all these scenes form part of the same plot. This inner unity of theirs Mr. Hardy has finely expressed by the conception of superterrestrial Intelligences, before whom the rolling earth unfolds its scenes as in a moving panorama. And these Intelligences also embody a more general and profound truth concerning that mysterious power—that mixture of blind chance and the far-ranging, unforeseen, but logical, consequences of man's acts which we call Destiny. As a means of co-ordinating the scattered scenes of the drama, Mr. Hardy's device of the spiritual spectators is not merely good, but I venture to think it is the only possible one.

The scenes where no individual speaks, but the country and the crowds are viewed as from a fleeting cloud, are highly imaginative and effective. Had the execution of *The Dynasts* been equal to the conception, no words of praise would have been too high for it. But Mr. Hardy is in the position of the painter who, having painted easel-pictures in oil for the greater part of his life, finds himself face to face with the wet plaster and the big wall. He has made a noble cartoon for his fresco, but he has had to work it out by means of a technique and in a manner too strange to him to yield perfectly satisfactory results. The intermingling of prose and poetry is not, as some have supposed, a clumsy device of early playwrights, but a particular gift and grace of the English tongue, as happily moulded for us in the Renaissance, and is nowhere so beautifully exemplified as in our Bible. Mr. Hardy does well to use his privilege; but it must be owned that he is somewhat apt to apportion things oddly, giving the matter of poetry to prose and the matter of prose to verse. For example, the description of Europe as a prone Titan shape, which hardly bears the literalness of prose, would have been a fine natural piece of imagery in poetry, while the reproduction of a debate in Parliament is plainly not the business of poetry. And is it not more than unnecessary to bring into the Strangers' Gallery of the House those viewless Intelligences who from their aery towers are supposed to be witnessing the whole series of earthly scenes passing below? On the other hand, there is a true imaginative significance in the descent of the Spirit of Rumour to mingle in human shape with the fashionable London crowd, where he is declared by each one in succession to have been some different notability.

The scene of the two old men watching by the beacon of Egdon Heath, where they are joined by a private of the Locals and his wife, is so entirely admirable that it seems something of an outrage to hack it in pieces for quotation. Yet I will do so.

FIRST OLD MAN: . . . . Did'st ever larn geography?
SECOND OLD MAN: No. Nor other corrupt practices.
FIRST OLD MAN: Tcht-tcht! Well, I'll have patience, and put it to him in another form. Dost know the world is round—eh? I warrant dostn't!
SECOND OLD MAN: I warrant I do!
FIRST OLD MAN: How d'ye make that out, when th'st never been to school?
SECOND OLD MAN: I larned it at church, thank God.
FIRST OLD MAN: Church? What have God A'mighty got to do with profane knowledge? Beware what you be saying, Jems Purchess!
SECOND OLD MAN; I say I did, whether or no. 'Twas the zingers up in the gallery that I had it from. They busted out that strong with "the round world and they that dwell therein," that we common fokes down under could do no less than believe 'em.

THOMAS HARDY AS PANORAMATIST. *cutting from* Saturday Review Jan 30 1904.

accompanying cutting from Outlook *of* Jan 16 1904.

FIRST OLD MAN: Can'st be sharp enough in the wrong place as usual—I warrant can'st! However, I'll have patience with 'en, and say on! Suppose now, my hat is the world; and there, as might be, stands the Camp of Belong, where Boney is. The world goes round, so, and Belong goes round too. Twelve hours pass; round goes the world still—so. Where's Belong now?

(*A pause. Two other figures, a man's and a woman's, rise against the sky out of the gloom.*)

FIRST OLD MAN (*shouldering his pike*): Who goes there? Friend or foe, in the King's name!

WOMAN: Piece o' trumpery! "Who goes" yourself! What d'ye talk o', John Whiting! Can't your eyes earn their living any longer, then, that you don't know your own neighbours?

Mr. Hardy has been very successful in drawing out the elements of grandeur and tragedy in the character and destiny of Pitt, and closes the first book of his drama fitly with the statesman's end. Thus the hovering Spirit of the years, watching above his death-bed, bids him depart if not in peace, at least to peace,

> Time and time,
> When all earth's light has lain on the nether side,
> And yapping midnight winds have leapt on roofs,
> And raised for him an evil harlequinade
> Of national disasters in long train,
> That tortured him with harrowing grimace,
> Have I communed with that Intelligence.
> Now I would leave him to pass out in peace
> And seek the silence unperturbedly.

Mr. Hardy gives us a brave lilting ballad of Trafalgar, and there are fine poetical passages in the first scene in the Overworld, such as:

> We'll close up Time as a bird its van,
> We'll traverse Space as spirits can,
> Link pulses severed by leagues and years,
> Bring cradles into touch with biers.

But too frequently the poetical effect of the work is marred by an insistent literalness which constantly keeps it on a level with an historical text-book.

In his preface, after explaining the origin and idea of his drama, Mr. Hardy says some sound things with regard to the play, which is not a stage play. He has met more than once with the dictum that "to declare a drama as being not for the stage is to make an announcement whose subject and predicate cancel each other." He has met with this dictum, and he may be sure that in slightly varying forms he will often meet with it again. For it has a superficial appearance of meaning something; it might pass for the statement of an æsthetic principle. And our average English critics naturally seize it from each other with eagerness. "The question," says Mr. Hardy, "seems to be an unimportant matter of terminology. Compositions cast in this shape were without doubt originally written for the stage only, and as a consequence their nomenclature was drawn directly from the vehicle of representation."

Now, the average Englishman is consumedly bored with a waltz by Beethoven or Chopin, but happily it does not occur to him to utter solemnly: "Dance music which cannot be danced to is an artistic anomaly." He simply pleads: "Play us a rattling good waltz"—or the street-organ tune from the latest musical comedy. Neither has the man who dislikes poetry yet given as his reason for disliking it that lyrics are no longer sung to the lyre. Indeed, of the mass of fine poetry which is cast in the general form of songs, the greater part is not, and, as vocalists tell me, cannot be, sung. Very various forms of art will naturally and legitimately be evolved from a single form.

But leaving general principles, what are historical facts? This kind of criticism assumes that the main vitality of those dramas which are great Literature has been on the stage: but, on the contrary, the study has been the main scene of their triumphs. The stage was an episode brief indeed in the history of the works of the Greek dramatists. It was in the studies of Renaissance scholars that they conquered the modern world. Shakespeare's universal fame—the great unchallenged glory of England—was not founded on his temporary popularity as a playwright in seventeenth-century England. In 1766, when the first translation of his works into German was published, it is questionable whether a single one of his enthusiastic readers had ever seen, whether one in a hundred was ever destined to see, a single one of his plays acted. To-day in England it is but an infinitesimal part of our knowledge of Shakespeare that we owe to the stage. If Shakespeare ceased to be read he would cease to be acted. And here the Robust Philistine critic will gladly agree with me. As to *Faust*, that is essentially a play for the study, and as such made its world-wide reputation. In short, perhaps half of our treasure of great European poetical Literature is in the dramatic form. To say, then, that the study is not the place for the drama, or that the dramatic form is an unreadable one, is merely another way of saying, "I do not like reading it." Are we to understand that the man who says that would cheerfully immerse himself in an Epic? I think not. And Mr. Hardy has surely been quite right in regarding the dramatic as the most readable form in which to present an epic subject.

MARGARET L. WOODS.

Black and White,
33. Bouverie Street, London. E.C.
(W. J. P. Monckton, Publisher.)
Cutting from issue dated Jan 23 1904

* THE BOOK WORLD: "NE

BY the influence of what maleficent spell does it so often happen that men of genius give the lie to their own best achievement? Why should a man, justly eminent in one art, or branch of an art, quit the field of his assured triumph to essay unknown and perilous paths in other directions? History is full of examples of such mistakes, some too ludicrous almost for belief. Frederick the Great would have yielded up a hard-won province to have rivalled Chaulieu or Voltaire as a writer of light verse. Richelieu lost all satisfaction in his political successes in contemplating his failure to rival Corneille and Racine. Warriors and politicians who covet the poetic crown are hardly more wonderful phenomena than those men of letters who seem blind to the limits of their own potentialities, and who have so often been known to prefer their own worst work. Scott honestly thought *Waterloo* as fine a piece of work as *Marmion;* Tennyson was deeply disgusted by the public injustice which refused to see in *The Promise of May* as fine a performance as *In Memoriam.* Such examples might be cited *ad infinitum*, but few more curious, more striking, or, it may at once be added, more painful, have been beheld than that furnished by Mr. Thomas Hardy's publication of the opening acts of *The Dynasts.*

...seen—as they, but all alive, like real men and women beheld from a great distance.

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A NAPOLEONIC BIOGRAPH,

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the Country Life
Dated January 16 1904.

THE SPEAKER. FEBRUARY 13, 1904.

A BOOK OF THE WEEK.

ANY new literary experiment by Mr. Thomas Hardy could not be other than interesting, but his latest excursion into the realms of novelty must be described as one of the most extraordinary feats ever attempted by any writer holding a place in English letters. *The Dynasts* (Macmillan) is called a drama on the cover, but the author explains carefully in the preface that this is a misnomer. It is "writing in play shape, not to be played." He thus consciously departs from the original intention of such writing. Drama in itself is, or ought to be, action. A dramatic poem is the speech of those who mimic action, as the epic is the speech of him who relates without imitation, and the lyric is the speech of him who sings. To strip Mr. Hardy's preface of some of its misleading phrases, *The Dynasts* appears to us to be simply a novel written in conversational form. At the end of the preface he suggests that a practical compromise might be made between those who think a play ought to be played and those who prefer to read such a work as this in the closet. His idea is that it might be represented with "a monotonic delivery of speeches, with dreamy, conventional gestures, something in the manner traditionally maintained by the old Christmas mummers, the curiously hypnotising impressiveness of whose automatic style—that of persons who spoke by no will of their own—will be remembered by all who ever experienced it. Gauzes or screens to blur outlines might still further shut off the actual." During next autumn, perhaps, we may find some performers who will attempt to render *The Dynasts* in this manner.

For their benefit it may be worth while to glance at the construction, though it may be as well to point out first that Mr. Hardy has overstepped his mark. It would almost seem as though he had taken the eulogies of the fifteenth-rate critics who do the reviewing in daily papers as a serious verdict on his work. Not otherwise can we explain the curious self-complacency with which he tries to place on the stage such men as Pitt, Fox, Sheridan, Napoleon, Murat, Soult, Ney, and the other most eminent characters of the time. Only one man in English literature has performed a similar feat successfully, and even he who limned for us Wolsey and Poins and Prince Hal might well have "held his breath for a time" if called upon to undertake a task like this. Further, Mr. Hardy, in bringing in the supernatural agencies which he calls "The Ancient Spirit of the Years," "The Spirit of the Pities," "Spirits Sinister and Ironic," "The Spirit of Rumour," and so forth, is challenging comparison with one of the greatest men the world has produced. He is backing *The Dynasts* against "Faust," and what Mr. Hardy calls the "Fore Scene" is really a sort of Prologue in Heaven; but we venture to say that never since the beginning of the world have spirits been gifted with such a lingo as they are made to speak here. Lest we should seem to exaggerate, let us give a few examples. Says the Spirit of the Years:

"You cannot swerve the pulsion of the Byss."

We fancy that most people will prefer the other place if a jargon like this be spoken in Heaven. The Spirit Sinister, whom we may describe as the Mephistopheles of the piece, utters his weird oracles as follows:

"Hence we've rare dramas going—more so since
It wove Its web in that Ajaccian womb!"

More recondite still is the manner in which the Spirit of the Pities vents its, his, or her, passion, for Pity, too, seems to have drunk not of the water of Helicon, but from that stream in Wessex which yields us so strange an English of this brand:

"For the large potencies
Instilled into his idiosyncrasy—
To throne fair Liberty in Privilege' room—
Are taking taint, and sink to common plots
For his own gain."

"Large potencies instilled into his idiosyncrasy" is good!

The Recording Angel sets down not the facts, but certain meditations in the impressionist style in a lilt not unfamiliar to students of Mr. Hardy. Of it we give the following example, culled chiefly for its harmony and sweetness:

"While one they eye, flushed from his crowning,
Ranks legions around him
To shake their enisled neighbour nation
And close her career!"

Such are a few specimens of the conversation of these "phantom intelligences," or "impersonated abstractions," who should, as it were, give the keynote to the drama that follows. But they dodge in and out of the play on its very long course. We do not propose to go carefully into the drama until it is completed, as this volume is stated to be only the first part, and two more are to follow. It will then have achieved at least one distinction, namely, that of being the longest printed drama in the English, and probably in any other, language. There are in it about 150 individual characters, and also hosts of Peers, Ministers, ex-Ministers, Members of Parliament, persons of quality, the Lord Mayor and Corporation of London, two beacon watchers, coach and other highway passengers, messengers, servants, rustics, French naval officers and petty officers, regiments of the French Army, aides, officials, pages, priests, acolytes, choristers, Italian doctors, Presidents of Institutions, regiments of the Austrian Army, regiments of the Russian Army, English ladies, princesses and ladies of Josephine's Court, seven Milanese young ladies, city and towns women, countrymen, country-women, and ship-women. The demand for supers would be extraordinary if the play were produced.

Perhaps a brief description of the third scene of the first act, which is laid in "London: the Old House of Commons," will give an idea of the rest. It begins with a kind of miniature prologue spoken by angels and spirits in this way. Angel number one sings to aerial music:

"Feeble-framed dull unresolve, unresourcefulness,
Sat in the halls of the Kingdom's high Councillors,
Whence an untactical torpid despondency
Weighed as with winter the national mind."

After the halls of Heaven have done resounding with this melody the fairy phantoms enter the gallery of the House in the disguise of ordinary strangers, and Sheridan rises. He makes a number of jokes which are interpolated with such phrases as "laughter" in this wise:

"And like the catamarans their sapience shaped
All fizzle and no harm. (Laughter.)"

The modern reporter would have put in "screams of laughter" at a joke like this.

Pitt follows, and makes a long oration of a kind that Dr. Johnson scarcely would have imagined for him. Feeble folk have been heard to complain that the proceedings of the present House of Commons are somewhat lacking in liveliness and interest, but that was before they had an opportunity of reading Mr. Thomas Hardy. If they like such specimens as we have selected, they can be heartily recommended to turn to the book itself, which contains shoals of gems equal in value to those we have, so to speak, put out on the window.

Serious students of literature will receive this book with nothing except the most absolute and unfeigned regret. It makes it perfectly evident, even to those who recognise fully what Mr. Hardy's gifts are, that he is totally unaware of his own limitations, and without even a rudimentary outfit is ready to engage with a light heart on "things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme." The publication of a work such as this promises to be when completed will throw a new light on the intellectual biography of the author. His reputation will scarcely be able to stand it.

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brightly. The doctor thought he would be better there but this poor old grandfather fell ill again one day. Whe grandfather was ill he wished he could send a message t his little granddaughter over the lands and over the sea to tell her he was thinking of her. It was a clear, brigh day, and a gentle wind was blowing. So he said, 'Kin Wind, blow over the lands and over the seas till you com to America, and there go blowing along till you find o my little darling, and tell her how I am thinking of he and how I love her, and give her this kiss, and bring ba a kiss from her to me.'

"But the Wind said, 'I am no use as a messenger. never know my own mind for two minutes together, and I blowing here and blowing there just as it pleases me. like to set the leaves rustling, and the waves curling, an the dust flying, and I like to play in corners. I am fond tricks, too, and carry off people's hats and caps. If started for America I should never get there, for I shoul be sure to go running and dancing after all the wild an happy things I met.'

"Then grandfather saw a pretty white cloud that was sai ing along across the blue sky. So he cried out, 'Pretty

enjoy.

THOMAS HARDY AS PANORAMATIST. *cutting from* Saturday Review Jan 30 1904

accompanying cutting from Outlook *of* Jan 16 1904.

REVIEWS OF THE WEEK

MR. HARDY IN BONDS

"The Dynasts." A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars, in Three Parts, Nineteen Acts, and One Hundred and Thirty Scenes. By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan & Co. 4*s.* 6*d.* net.

THE splendid and sinister figure of the great Napoleon has been the centre round which numberless plays and romances have revolved—works for the most part dealing only with certain aspects of that amazing personality, which mastered and destroyed, crushed and was conquered. But Mr. Hardy has been more greatly daring, though perhaps, strictly, not more ambitious than most of his predecessors; for the full scope of his projected trilogy, of which this volume represents only the first part, "is concerned with the Great Historical Calamity, or Clash of Peoples, artificially brought about some hundred years ago." The attempt, therefore, is more daring because it covers so vast a subject on lines as historically accurate as may be; hardly more ambitious, because the very conditions laid down by the author lead him rather to deal with facts than with the psychological conditions which made those facts absolute. In a word, Mr. Hardy shows us what was accomplished in that terrifying drama; he scarcely attempts, in his individual characterisations, to present us with reasons or solutions. Yet the work, in many ways, is very personal, very direct, very brilliant.

In his preface Mr. Hardy explains the genesis and development of "The Dynasts." The choice of subject sprang mainly from accidents of locality. The country round about George the Third's favourite watering-place was familiar to the writer, the district was near the coast which had thrilled with fear of the French invasion, and the same countryside held the village where Hardy, Nelson's flag-captain at Trafalgar, was born. "The Trumpet-Major," it will be remembered, dealt with this period, but on a plan, in Mr. Hardy's view, so necessarily restricted that only the fringe of the subject was touched. After an interval of twenty years we have this further and fuller effort to present in its true proportions the influence of England in those bewildering turmoils and devastations.

So far, then, everything is plain sailing. Mr. Hardy, in this volume, is to take us, progressively and dramatically, from a March day in Wessex in 1805 to the day of Pitt's death after the disaster of Austerlitz. It is with the treatment that the difficulties begin, and these meet us in a Fore Scene which passes in the Overworld. The characters who play their parts in this vague atmosphere include the Ancient Spirit of the Years, the Spirit of the Pities, the Spirit of Rumour—with their respective choruses—the Shade of the Earth, Spirit Messengers, and Recording Angels. These Phantom Intelligences are to "be taken by the reader for what they may be worth as contrivances of the fancy merely." Their doctrines are but tentative, and are advanced with little eye to a systematised philosophy warranted to lift "the burthen of the mystery of this unintelligible world." But this statement is rather an evasion than a plea; for at least these phantasmal intelligences embody Mr. Hardy's theory of the Universe, and such theories, right or wrong, should have been uttered, if uttered at all, by characters in the living drama. A play avowedly and carefully dealing with facts is, in our view, weakened by the comments and recitatives of Spirits of Rumour and Irony, and Recording Angels, and when certain of these take on human shape and assume the mantle of prophecy we approach too nearly the dangerous border-line of the grotesque. No beauty of expression—and beauty of expression is not lacking—no force of insight and perception—and both insight and perception are here—can quite reconcile us to these servants of the Immanent Will which stands in "The Dynasts" to represent the idea of God. It is not that we object to any theory which Mr. Hardy may entertain concerning this "unintelligible world"; it is merely that in such a drama as he has planned we find these phantasmal intelligences out of the picture and doubtful in art.

The scenes of the drama shift so continually that it would be impossible even to summarise them here; it must suffice to say that they cover the fear which shook England, the debate in the Commons on the Bill to repeal Pitt's "Patent Parish Pill," Napoleon's preparations at Boulogne, his abandonment of the scheme of invasion, his advance upon Ulm, and the battles of Trafalgar and Austerlitz. Many as are the scenes, there is no confusion, no difficulty in following the steady development of events. As we have said, Mr. Hardy has not troubled himself greatly with subtleties of characterisation; he has gone on accepted lines and made no attempt to elucidate history. Nor within the limits which he has set himself was there need to go beyond the ample material ready to his hand. In expression "The Dynasts" is often fine, with a wide sense of space and great force and beauty of words. After he has signed a despatch to the Emperor, Villeneuve says:

> Why dared I not disclose to him my thought,
> As nightly worded by the whistling shrouds,
> That Brest will never see our battled hulls
> Helming to north in pomp of cannonry
> To take the lead in this red pilgrimage!

There are not many lines so admirable as these, but quite enough to show that Mr. Hardy has a command of blank verse which his earlier volumes hardly indicated. But to our mind the best scenes in the book, and certainly the most convincing, are those in which plain people talk plain prose. That between two old men who are doing duty as beacon-keepers on Egdon Heath has all the qualities of Mr. Hardy's best fiction; the scene lingers in the memory when more heroic passages have faded; it has the smell of earth, and true simplicity, and a brooding sense of the mystery of the night. When one of the watchers says—

> There'll be a change in the weather soon, by the look o't. I can hear the cows moo in Froom Valley as if I were close to 'em, and the lantern at Max Turnpike is shining quite plain,

we feel that here once more the author of "The Woodlanders" and "Under the Greenwood Tree" is on intimate ground. It is not that the rest of the volume is unreal exactly, but we feel that Mr. Hardy is moving in bonds.

An author, of course, has a perfect right to choose his own subject and treat it in his own way; but it is permitted to the reader to arrive at his own conclusions. And our conclusion is that in "The Dynasts" Mr. Hardy has given to an artificial form of drama what should have been given to romance. After all, historical accuracy as to fact in such work matters very little in comparison with accuracy of atmosphere and the pervading and authentic breath of life. To put the matter briefly, we prefer both as literature and art the fringe of the subject as touched in "The Trumpet-Major" to the texture of it as treated in "The Dynasts." In the one case we have a moving story wrought with infinite care and full of human modulations; in the other we have a drama greatly planned, but lacking in concentration and the intimacy of simple things. Upon his title-page Mr. Hardy has set the majestic words from Tennyson's "Dream of Fair Women":

> And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and wrong,
> And trumpets blown for wars.

The sounds, indeed, we hear, yet far away and like the memory of a dream, not poignantly and striking at the heart.

women beheld from a great distance.

Pushing ingenuity a step further, one might even defend the likeness of these figures to automata. For

has to wrestle—sometimes quite successfully—for his effects. No one, again, will deny that Mr. Hardy is, in the large sense of the word, a dramatist. But his

(Turn over)

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A DEFENCE O
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Your writer on Hardy
is incompetent to form

THE MORNING LEADER,

13 FEBRUARY, 1904.

THE "TIMES" AND "THE DYNASTS."

There is a very pretty little duel afoot between Mr. Thomas Hardy and a contributor to the "Times," whose anonymity I would not for worlds profane. When, on glancing down his column, my eye is caught by the expressions, "épater le bourgeois . . . faute de mieux . . tour de force . . genre," a vague conjecture as to the writer's identity may arise in my mind; but nothing shall tempt me to disclose it. The chief interest of the affair lies in its revelation of Mr. Hardy's talent for controversy, which, to me at any rate, was as yet unknown. His letter is a little masterpiece. A neater and more skilful retort was never delivered. The end is not yet. One can scarcely doubt that the "Times" critic is preparing his rejoinder; for he, too, is "a first-class fighting man," and never pluckier than when, like Sir Hugh Witherington of the ballad, he has not a leg to stand on. But exigencies of the Press forbid me to wait until he has delivered his blow. He may perhaps be able to make a good case (he will certainly make an ingenious one) in defence of his theoretical contentions, theoretically impugned by Mr. Hardy; but in the meantime I propose to examine them from the practical point of view—the point of view of experience. In other words, I propose to cite, more fully than Mr. Hardy could in his brief letter, the examples which dispose of the critic's argument.

Here is the point of contention, as stated by the "Times" critic:

To those who urge that an unplayable play is a contradiction in terms, Mr. Hardy replies that "the question seems to be an unimportant matter of terminology." Compositions cast in the dramatic shape, he says, were without doubt originally written for the stage only; "but in the course of time such a shape would reveal itself to be an eminently readable one." Would it? Has it? We think not. But even if it be conceded that some plays happen to be readable, does that prove that plays ought to be written in order to be read? By no means.

Now it is only fair to interpret the writer liberally, and reply to what he probably means rather than to what he actually says. His "Would it? Has it? We think not," if taken, as he would say, "au pied de la lettre," can only imply that drama, as a whole, is an unreadable form. This, of course, is too wildly absurd to be for a moment taken as his real meaning. The classic drama of Greece, of England, of France, of Germany, is at least as much read as any other form of classic literature, unless it be a novel or two, such as "Don Quixote" or "Robinson Crusoe." In England, from the time of Elizabeth until well on in the eighteenth century, the latest "play-book" was as eagerly snapped up at the booksellers' as the latest novel is to-day. In France, as our critic must surely know, plays have a very large sale. In Germany the printed plays of Sudermann, Hauptmann, and even less famous writers go off like hot cakes, in editions that run to scores of thousands. It is true that in England, for the past half-century, there has been a prejudice against the reading of modern plays—mainly because, until some ten or twelve years ago, there were no modern plays worth reading. But this prejudice is gradually dying away; and in any case it was quite peculiar to nineteenth-century England. In all other countries, and at all other times, printed plays, when they existed at all, have ranked among the most popular forms of literature.

All this I say merely "lest we forget," for I do not in the least imagine that the "Times" critic is to be understood as denying it. His real meaning, I take it, is that unplayable plays are also unreadable—that plays written, as Mr. Hardy says, "for mental performance" alone, had better not be written at all, because they imply a misrelation of means to ends. To the assumption here involved, that the "means" of drama are applicable only to the "ends" of the actual theatre, I shall presently return. For the moment, I wish to enumerate a few of the plays which, according to this argument, ought never to have been written. Mr. Hardy mentions two of them: "Prometheus Unbound" and Byron's "Cain." He might have added Milton's "Samson Agonistes," Goethe's "Faust," all the plays of Alfred de Musset, and Ibsen's "Brand," "Peer Gynt," and "Emperor and Galilean." These are works which the world at large has not found wholly unreadable. I shall be told that almost all of them have been placed on the stage. Yes, ultimately, and in terribly truncated shape; but they were written for reading not for acting, and were eventually acted because they were read, not read because they were acted. This is true even of Alfred de Musset's plays—for years no one imagined them playable, and they were first produced by a daring actress in Russia, long after they had taken their eminent place in French literature. As for "Lorenzaccio," recent attempts to reduce it to theatrical limits have notably failed; yet, who will deny that it is a masterpiece of drama? I do not pretend to have exhausted the list of unplayable plays which yet are noble and vital and eminently readable pieces of literature. As for readable works in dramatic form which do not exactly call themselves "plays," their name, in these days, is legion. I will only cite "The Gadsbys," by Mr. Kipling, and the works of an author of whom the "Times" critic may have heard —the vivacious "Gyp." But these writings, he may reply, though in the form of dialogue, make no attempt to subject themselves to the exigencies of the theatre. That is true—and equally true of Mr. Hardy's "Dynasts."

Let me now suggest how the critic has, in his haste, gone astray. He has confounded (roughly speaking) dramas which are too big for the stage with dramas which are too bad for the stage. The unactable "literary drama" is, as a rule, unreadable as well, for the simple reason that it is still-born—that it never had the breath of life in it. A play which comes within the physical dimensions prescribed by the stage, yet is unadapted for acting, is pretty certain to be very dull reading to boot. But there is not the slightest reason why a poet should not adopt the dramatic form, while deliberately setting his imagination free from the trammels of time and space imposed on the acted playwright by the conditions of the theatre. The resultant poem may of course be bad; but some of the greatest and most vital masterpieces in the world's literature proclaim, trumpet-tongued, that it may also be good. As for the "relation of means to ends," why should imitation by way of narrative be better related to the "end"—which I take to be æsthetic enjoyment—than imitation by way of dialogue, even if it does not fit readily into the frame of the proscenium? Life, after all, outside a Trappist monastery, is largely composed of dialogues which are unadapted for the stage; why should the artist be forbidden to imitate them? If you come to think of it, all fiction whatsoever is merely drama which is more or less unadapted for the stage. In his descriptions the author sets the scenes; his narrative of events is nothing but amplified stage-direction. He may omit the element of dialogue altogether, though this has not been the practice of the great writers of fiction from Homer to Hardy; but even if he does so, the dialogue remains implicit in his text, not expressed, but understood. The modern writer of fiction, indeed, assumes a license of direct analysis, forbidden to the dramatist—unless his initials happen to be G. B. S. But is an author to be reprimanded if he renounces this license, and undertakes to suggest his analysis through the medium of dialogue? Should he succeed (and instances of success are numerous, both in playable and in unplayable plays), his triumph is all the greater.

WILLIAM ARCHER.

Westminster Gazette. 21.1.'04

MR. HARDY'S PLAY.*

The announcement made last autumn that a play was to be given us by Mr. Hardy—it is over-long since he gave us anything—was received with a thrill of excitement. Speculation ran high. Of what sort, it was eagerly asked, would this play be? Would its theme be history, ancient or modern; would it be the latter-day problem-play; would it be symbolic allegorical drama, after the manner to which Maeterlinck has accustomed us? Then came the title, and with it a foreword: "*The Dynasts, a Drama on the Napoleonic Wars; in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes.*" And thereat many wise ones smiled and shook their heads, and a few waited, and those who waited were wisest.

In this, the first part of "The Dynasts," Mr. Hardy has started out not to produce a stage-play at all, but to give the dramatic presentment of those brief years at the beginning of the last century when Napoleon was intent on making that descent upon England which he was never to accomplish; when Trafalgar was still unfought; when Pitt was Prime Minister; when George III. of dullest memory was King. By the magic of which Mr. Hardy alone of now living writers holds the secret, each one of these short acts, of these still shorter scenes, is put before us in colours so living, so vivid, that, reading them, one is actually on the spot with Pitt, harassed, broken, but undaunted, meeting the gibes of Sheridan and his men in the old House of Commons; with Pitt again at Weymouth seeking wisdom where it did not dwell—inside the pine-apple pate of the reigning Sovereign; with Nelson at Trafalgar; with Napoleon at and after Austerlitz; with ill-fated Villeneuve before his tragic end at Rennes.

Even to those who know and appreciate Mr. Hardy's shorter poems this epic will come as a surprise, almost as a revelation. Rarely fine is the quality of its blank verse. It convinces, whether one will or no, because its lines, tense, resolute, rugged, often rough-edged, often, too, unequal, hold within them that passion of purpose and that concentration of nervous energy which, when allied, make up a driving-power that sweeps all before it. Browning is inevitably recalled, but, let us hasten to add, with no suggestion of imitation. Neither in method nor in philosophical outlook is there likeness, much less similarity, between these two writers. But in both, the inner governor, the spirit that imperiously demands for its expression force rather than prettiness, strength rather than polish, is manifestly one and the same.

Verbal felicities, hall-marked by the special genius of Mr. Hardy, lie thick on every page; so, too, it may be objected, do verbal infelicities, and we are not concerned to deny the statement, for the Academic, good or bad, is not within these covers.

The extraordinary, the peculiar interest of the book, however, lies outside and beyond its mere "story." In writing it Mr. Hardy has elected to add to his living dramatis personæ a group of "spirits," "intelligences," "shades," who, after the fashion of the Greek chorus, make before and after comment on life's scenes as they are shifted for the mortals of the drama. In the Greek play the part of the chorus was to reveal the mind of the gods. Is it over-bold to declare that in the utterances of one at least of the "Intelligences" of "The Dynasts"—the "Spirit of the Years"—we have glimpses, nay, far more than glimpses, of Mr. Hardy's innermost mind? Here, as we venture to think, is to be found his philosophy of life, his view of the scheme of things, of Creation, Purpose, Free-will, of all those problems which from the beginning have tormented, and which, to the end, will continue to torment the mind of thinking man.

B. A. C.

THOMAS HARDY AS PANORAMATIST.

cutting from Saturday Review
Jan 30 1904

EIGHT years ago "Jude the Obscure" was published. Since then Mr. Hardy has given us two or three volumes of poetry, and now a volume of drama,* but no other novel. One assumes that he has ceased as a novelist. Why has he ceased? The reason is generally said to be that he was disheartened by the many hostile criticisms of "Jude the Obscure". To accept that explanation were to insult him. A puny engine of art may be derailed by such puny obstacles as the public can set in its way. So strong an engine as Mr. Hardy rushes straight on, despite them, never so little jarred by them, and stops not save for lack of inward steam. Mr. Hardy writes no more novels because he has no more novels to write.

A fascinating essay could be written on the autumnal works of great writers. Sooner or later, there comes for the great writer a time when he feels that his best work is done—that the fire in him has sunk to a glow. And then, instinctively, he shrinks from the form in which he cast the works of his youth and of his prime, and from the themes he then loved best. But he cannot be idle—the fire still glows. Other forms, other themes, occur to him and are grasped by him. In England, during recent years, great writers in their autumn have had a rather curious tendency: they have tended to write either about Napoleon or about Mrs. Meynell. The late Mr. Coventry Patmore wrote about Mrs. Meynell. Mr. Meredith has written both about Mrs. Meynell and about Napoleon. Mr. Hardy now readjusts the balance, confining himself to Napoleon. So far, his procedure is quite normal: a new theme, through a new form. But I mislead you when I speak of Mr. Hardy as "confining himself to Napoleon". "Excluding Mrs. Meynell" would be more accurate. He is so very comprehensive. Pitt, Sheridan, Nelson, George III., and, throughout Europe everyone who played a notable part during the First Empire—here they all are, in company with various spirits, shades and choruses, marshalled into the scope of six acts and thirty-five scenes. Nor has Mr. Hardy done with them yet. This book is but a third of his scheme. The trilogy will comprise nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes. Prodigious, is it not? And it marks its schemer as (in the stricter sense of the word) a prodigy. Normally, the great writer, forsaking the form of his greatness, gravitates to littler forms. The theme may be great or little, but he treats it within a little compass. Mr. Hardy's vitality would seem to have diminished only for his own special form. At any rate, it is such that he believes it sufficient for an attack on the illimitable and the impossible.

Impossible his task certainly is. To do perfectly what he essays would need a syndicate of much greater poets than ever were born into the world, working in an age of miracles. To show us the whole world, as seen, in a time of stress, by the world that is unseen by us! Whoever so essays must be judged according to the degree by which his work falls infinitely short of perfection. Mr. Hardy need not fear that test. "The Dynasts" is a noble achievement, impressive, memorable.

To say that it were easy to ridicule such a work is but a tribute to the sublimity of Mr. Hardy's intent, and to the newness and strangeness of his means. It is easy to smile at sight of all these great historic figures reduced to the size of marionettes. I confess that I, reading here the scene of the death of Nelson, was irresistibly reminded of the same scene as erst beheld by me, at Brighton, through the eyelet of a peep-show, whose proprietor strove to make it more realistic for me by saying in a confidential tone "'Ardy, 'Ardy, I am wounded, 'Ardy.—Not mortially, I 'ope, my lord?—Mortially, I fear, 'Ardy." The dialogue here is of a different and much worthier kind; yet the figures seem hardly less tiny and unreal. How could they be life-sized and alive, wedged into so small a compass between so remote and diverse scenes? Throughout this play the only characters who stand to human height, drawing the breath of life, are the Wessex peasants. "When", says Mr. Hardy in his preface, "'The Trumpet Major' was printed, more than twenty years ago, I found myself in the tantalising position of having touched the fringe of a vast international tragedy without being able, through limits of plan, knowledge, and opportunity, to enter further into its events; a restriction that prevailed for many years". Well, that restriction has vanished. But remains the difference between a writer's power to project the particular thing which he has known lovingly in youth and his power to project the general thing which he has studied in maturity. For my own part, I wish these Wessex peasants had been kept out of "The Dynasts". They mar the unity of an effect which is, in the circumstances, partially correct. The general effect of littleness does, without doubt, help the illusion which Mr. Hardy seeks to create. That miraculous syndicate of which I dreamed anon would have kept the figures as tiny as here they seem—as tiny, but all alive, like real men and women beheld from a great distance.

Pushing ingenuity a step further, one might even defend the likeness of these figures to automata. For Mr. Hardy's aim is to show them, not merely as they appear to certain supernal, elemental spirits, but also as blindly obedient to an Immanent Will, which

> "works unconsciously, as heretofore,
> Eternal artistries in Circumstance,
> Whose patterns, wrought by rapt æsthetic rote
> Seem in themselves Its single listless aim,
> And not their consequence".

From the Overworld the Spirit of the Years watches the eternal weaving of this pattern. The Spirit Ironic watches, too, smiling. The Spirit Sinister, too, watches laughing. There is a Spirit of the Pities; but she is young, as Mr. Hardy insists, and quite helpless. Beneath them "Europe is disclosed as a prone and emaciated figure, and the branching mountain-chains like ribs, the peninsular plateau of Spain forming a head. . . . The point of view then sinks downwards through space, and draws near to the surface of the perturbed countries, where the peoples, distressed by events which they did not cause, are seen writhing, crawling, heaving, and vibrating in their various cities and nationalities. . . . A new and penetrating light descends, enduing men and things with a seeming transparency, and exhibiting as one organism the anatomy of life and movement in all humanity". The Spirits draw nearer still to earth. They flit over the English ground, near the open Channel. A stage-coach passes. "See now", says one of the passengers to another, "how the Channel and coast open out like a chart. . . . One can see half across to France up here". The irony of this contrast between their vision and the vision just vouchsafed to us strikes the keynote of the whole drama. How ridiculous that historic debate in the House of Commons! Sheridan thundering at Pitt, and Pitt at Sheridan, and above them in the gallery, in the guise of human Strangers, those abstract Spirits, sitting till they are "spied" by an officious Member! Anon these Spirits are in the cathedral of Milan. Napoleon, in all his trappings, places the crown of Lombardy upon his brow. Before him the Cardinal Archbishop swings a censer. The organ peals an anthem. "What", asks the Spirit of the Pities, "is the creed that these rich rites disclose?" And the Spirit of the Years answers

> "A local thing called Christianity,
> Which the wild dramas of this wheeling sphere
> Include, with divers other such, in dim,
> Pathetical, and brief parentheses".

The Imperial procession passes out to the palace. "The exterior of the cathedral is seen, but the point of view recedes, the whole fabric smalling into distance and becoming like a rare, delicately-carved ornament. The city itself sinks to miniature, the Alps show afar as a white corrugation . . . clouds cover the panorama", and our next sight is of the dockyard at Gibraltar. Thus we range hither and thither, with the Spirits, listening to their reflections on the infinite littleness and helplessness and unmeaning of all things here below. We see, at last, the toy field of Austerlitz, and the toy death-bed of Pitt. Thereat the book closes, looking strangely like a duodecimo.

The book closes, and (so surely has it cast its spell on us) seems a quite fugitive and negligible little piece of work. We wonder why Mr. Hardy wrote it; or rather, one regrets that the Immanent Will put him to the trouble of writing it. "Wot's the good of anythink? Wy, nothink" was the refrain of a popular coster-song some years ago, and Mr. Hardy has set it ringing in our ears again. But presently the mood passes. And, even as in the stage-directions of "The Dynasts" we see specks becoming mountain-tops, so do we begin to realise that we have been reading a really great book. An imperfect book, as I have said—inevitably imperfect. And less perfect than it might quite easily have been. That Mr. Hardy is a poet, in the large sense of the word, nobody will dare deny. But his poetry expresses itself much more surely and finely through the medium of prose than through the medium of rhyme and metre. I wish he had done "The Dynasts" in prose, of which he has a mastery, rather than in a form wherein he has to wrestle—sometimes quite successfully—for his effects. No one, again, will deny that Mr. Hardy is, in the large sense of the word, a dramatist. But his

(Turn over)

* "The Dynasts, a drama of the Napoleonic Wars," by Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan.)

drama expresses itself better through narration than through dialogue and stage-directions. He writes here not for the stage; and, except an eye to the stage, there is no reason or excuse for using a form which must always (be our dramatic imagination never so vivid) hamper and harass us in the study. But, when every reservation has been made, "The Dynasts" is still a great book. It is absolutely new in that it is the first modern work of dramatic fiction in which free-will is denied to the characters. Free-will is supposed to be a thing necessary to human interest. If it were so indeed, we should get no excitement from Homer. Not that Mr. Hardy's negation resembles Homer's. Achilles and the rest were life-sized puppets, whose strings were being pulled, at near hand, by gods scarcely larger than they. Mr. Hardy's puppets are infinitesimal—mere "electrons", shifted hither and thither, for no reason, by some impalpable agency. Yet they are exciting. Free-will is not necessary to human interest. Belief in it is, however, necessary to human life. Cries Mr. Hardy's Spirit of the Pities

"This tale of Will
And Life's impulsion by Incognizance
I cannot take".

Nor can I. But I can take and treasure, with all gratitude, the book in which that tale is told so finely.

Having quite shaken off that awful sense of proportion which "The Dynasts" forced on me as I read it, I can turn, with proper enthusiasm, to the events of the moment. "Old Heidelberg" is back at the S. James'. The cast is as when first I saw it, except that Käthie is now played, very prettily, by Miss Lilian Braithwaite. From February 10th to 16th the O.U.D.S. will perform "As You Like It".

MAX BEERBOHM.

Pall Mall Gazette Jan 14 1904

MR. HARDY'S DRAMA.*

MR. HARDY allowed it to be understood some time ago that he had abandoned fiction and was to devote himself for the future to poetry. This passion for the sister art seems to be a mark of later years. Perhaps it is because the spirit reverts to lyrical impulses after the passage of the grand climacteric. It cannot, however, be said that there is this excuse for "The Dynasts," from which the lyrical quality is almost entirely absent. There is, indeed, one song towards the close of the book which recalls a mellifluous mode, and is representative of Mr. Hardy's muse at her best. It goes with a lilt and a swing, and here is the concluding stanza:—

The victors and the vanquished then the storm it tossed and tore,
As hard they strove, those worn-out men, upon that surly shore;
Dead Nelson and his half-dead crew, his foes from near and far,
Were rolled together on the deep that night at Trafalgar.
The deep, the deep
That night at Trafalgar.

But "The Dynasts" is, for the rest, some 230 pages of mingled blank verse and prose, the prose, as in Shakspeare, being the medium of the dialogue of countryfolk and clowns. Some of these hail from Wessex, and we even make the acquaintance of "Old Granfer Cantle" of "The Return of the Native" in his early prime. Mr. Hardy's admirers, who are scattered in all quarters of the world, know well what to expect when he deals with these rustic scenes. We wish this drama was more occupied with them. But, unhappily, the purpose is more serious. "The Dynasts" is designed as a panorama of the Napoleonic wars. It opens in March, 1805, and closes after six acts with the death of Pitt. That is to say, this first part does; for Mr. Hardy promises us two more parts, making a total of nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty odd scenes.

Obviously, therefore, "The Dynasts" may not be judged in the category of ordinary plays. Mr. Hardy declares that it is intended only for "mental performance," and goes on to suggest that possibly it might be performed by Christmas mummers. Frankly, we do not see how this would be possible, for what could be made of such a scene as that which opens the drama, and consists of the conversation of "phantom intelligences," or of the several scenes which apparently take place in dumb show, being merely descriptive stage directions.

The level of the blank verse is not commensurate with the dignity of Mr. Hardy's theme. The preface in its fine prose-phrasing is in strange contrast with the halting verse which it ushers in; as witness such lines as these:—

Note Nelson's worn-out features, much has he
Suffered from labour and anxiety!

Or these:—

NELSON: Hardy, I think they've done for me at last!
HARDY: I hope not.
NELSON: Yes; my backbone is shot through.
I have not long to live.
And what of this?
Besides poor Scott, my lord, and Charles Adair,
Lieutenant Kam, and Whipple, captain's clerk,
There's Smith, and Palmer, midshipmen, just killed,
And fifty odd of seamen and marines.

It is obvious that Mr. Hardy must have succeeded in visualising the panorama for himself, but it is equally obvious that he has not been able to interpret it or present it to others. He is consumed with a sense of Destiny, of Faith, of purblind mortality, and he makes haste to string us this thread of scenes to illustrate his sense of dread and pity. But where he might have succeeded in prose fiction, he fails in dramatic verse. Years ago he wrote "The Trumpet Major," which touched on those stirring times, and he might well have pursued the example of Zola, had he been so minded, and have given us a trilogy of novels completing the scenic picture. Unhappily Mr. Hardy has not done that. His verse is remarkable for its simplicity and uncouthness at once. He employs odd words, fetching some of them from the vasty deep, such as "unshow," "buoyance," "upresolve," "incarn," to name but a few. Great poets have written uncouthly, as, for example, Browning, who was the author of the strange product, "The Householder," whose jargon defies ordinary criticism:—

As I was sitting in my house, late, late;

Dreary, weary with the long day's work,
Head of me, heart of me, stupid as a stone,
Tongue-tied now, now blaspheming like a Turk. . . .

But Mr. Hardy could not aspire to write verse with the inspiration of Browning, any more than Browning could have written fiction with the imagination of Mr. Hardy.

George drools and babbles in a darkened room;
His heaven-born Minister declines apace;
All smoothes the Emperor's way.

It has a smack of Browning, faint and distant; yet those lines were poured into the ear of the Spirit of Rumour by a Parisian "street-woman"! Browning would have hardly passed that. Its simplicity is too primitive.

* "The Dynasts." By Thomas Hardy. Part I. (London: Macmillan and Co.)

Oxford Magazine

Literary Supplement

VOL. XXII.] WEDNESDAY, MAY 25, 1904. [NO. 21.

A DRAMA OF PREDESTINATION.

WHETHER or not it was part of Mr. Hardy's intention in writing *The Dynasts* to dumbfound the worthy burgher, as at least one critic surmised, there can be no doubt that *The Dynasts* has dumbfounded the greater number of us, worthy burghers, critics, and all. Worthy burghers—and, for that matter, worthy critics too, the classes not being mutually exclusive, as we ourselves perhaps will show—are usually embarrassed by anything that looks new; and if hearsay be trustworthy, we have not hastened in any great numbers to make ourselves acquainted with *The Dynasts* at first hand. Its bearing, however, has been common talk for some time; and if we have been slow to welcome it, that is very likely because most of us, as Mr. Hardy himself thinks, have shown a tendency to "harden our hearts against the 'Immanent Will.'" Predestination, he argued in his second letter to *The Times*, is an idea at least as old as St. Paul, and yet we shy at the "Immanent Will"! If that were the whole of the matter, our half-hearted greeting to *The Dynasts* would certainly be scandalous. There is, however, another aspect to this business of the "Immanent Will": and as St. Paul has been cited on one side, it is fair on ours to point out that he may have held never so strongly to Predestination as a theory, but he made it the basis of no plays. The whole essence of the matter lies in that. We worthy burghers may be quite ready to embrace the "Immanent Will" on philosophic grounds without abating by one jot our suspicion of Its dramatic possibilities. Mr. Hardy has tried to make drama from stuff not previously (as we believe) so used; the point of interest lies for the moment not so much in the stuff itself as in its novel use.

The argument centres, then, in the scheme of Phantom Intelligences, whose doctrines, Mr. Hardy says in his Preface, "are but tentative and are advanced with little eye to a systematized philosophy warranted to lift 'the burthen of the mystery' of this unintelligible world." Tentative or absolute, those doctrines gave rise to the form in which the drama is cast; the contrasted choruses of the spirit world and (to quote the Preface again) "other conventions of this external feature, were shaped with a single view to the modern expression of a modern outlook;" and it is therefore a drama with a philosophic purpose, however undogmatic or tentative, which (to dismiss all theological issues) challenges the worthy burgher's aesthetic faculties. Not, however, with a philosophic purpose as its only, or even as its original, aim. Mr. Hardy was first actuated, he says, by "the provokingly slight regard paid to English influence and action" in the Napoleonic struggle, and he therefore planned "a new handling of the theme which should re-embody the features of this influence in their true proportion." A panoramic drama, then, with two purposes, historical and philosophic—those are the terms on which *The Dynasts* makes its appeal.

It will not be possible to judge *The Dynasts* historically till all three parts are out; for in spite of Trafalgar, the morrow of Austerlitz and the death of Pitt, where this part ends, leave English influence still beneath a cloud. But we may at once give every praise to the power of condensation and grasp of the essential which Mr. Hardy's arrangement shows. The worst of such praise is that it sounds applicable rather to a primer than to a play; and it is just there, in fact (if we except the one or two *genre* scenes), that the weakness lies. If you reverse your telescope, you must expect to see things small. Mr. Hardy's plan and his philosophy both make it necessary to reverse the telescope. The philosophy, indeed, is ever closest at his elbow when he treats of his great men. Nelson and Hardy are human beings, but the Spirits give us little chance of feeling it. The common folk, however, sometimes elude their ghostly vigilance:—

WOMAN (in undertones).

I can tell you a word or two on't. It is about His victuals. They say that He lives upon human flesh, and has rashers o' baby every morning for breakfast—for all the world like the Cernel Giant in old ancient times!

SECOND OLD MAN.

Ye can't believe all ye hear.

PRIVATE.

I only believe half. And I only own—such in my challengeful character—that perhaps He do eat pagan infants when He's in the desert. But not Christian ones at home. Oh no—'tis too much!

WOMAN.

Whether or no, I sometimes—God forgie me!—laugh wi' horror at the queerness o't, till I am that weak I can hardly go round house. He should have the washing of 'em a few times; I warrant 'a wouldn't want to eat babies any more!

That is the Thomas Hardy of other times! We must not, however, gird at him for not doing what he deliberately meant not to do. Humanity is at a discount in this play; and in the end, as has been suggested, we may realize it as a drama of nations, to compensate for the absence of fond men. If that idea is realized, the play will make a strangely close analogy to the *Persae* of Aeschylus. We feel of that time, as the Greeks felt of the Persian wars, that in a national struggle we were really fighting for the whole world; men's sympathies are still acutely engaged in it on this side or on that; its historic names, whether of men or places, are still names to thrill the blood; and Thomas Hardy, as he tells us himself, is drawn to it by a personal tie, though less closely than was Aeschylus to Marathon and Plataea. Comparison at the present stage is perhaps profitless; but we remember that the older poet, to raise his drama to the height of its great argument, left out all human beings whose appeal to the hearers would have been personal and therefore out of scale. Mr. Hardy seems to aim at both appeals, and perhaps may fail in both. We remember, too, in the wild medley of this account of Trafalgar, how simple was the old ἄγγελος device for picturing Salamis, and through-

(turn over)

ETHICS. April 23 · 1904

AN EPIC DRAMA.[1]

WHEN, some weeks age, I inquired at the circulating library for *The Dynasts*, the lady in charge considered it superfluous to advance any elaborate excuse for its absence from her stock of new publications. As a matter of fact, she replied in two words, but there were volumes of contemptuous explanation in her tone and expression.

"*It's poetry!*"

"Yes," I perforce admitted; but, in deprecation of the finality of this objection, added: "It is also Thomas Hardy."

To cut a long matter short, by a tactful and wary adoption of the useful policy of the unfortunate widow, I at last secured the coveted volume, and, having duly read it, am now in a position to express something of my sense of delight and gratitude for what bids fair, when its three parts, nineteen acts, and 130 scenes have been duly issued, to command ultimate, if tardy, recognition as the monumental *chef d'œuvre* of a good master. The form chosen by Hardy for the presentation of his massive theme is not, if one comes to think of it, so revolutionary as it at first sight appears. For the ten historic dramas of Shakespeare, though not perfectly continuous, are sufficiently so to constitute them practically one epic series, unified by the scheme of a single sublime conception—the Epic of Feudal England. I often wonder that none of our great actor-managers has ever been fired with the ambition to present Shakespeare's historic dramas in sequence, as Wagner's Ring Series is given. So presented, their grandeur would produce an impression transcending anything to be expected of isolated performances of this or that selected play.

out it we wait in vain for some such thrill as came with the Greek chant at dawn:—

οὐ γὰρ ἂν φυγῇ
παιᾶν' ἰφύμνουν σεμνὸν Ἕλληνες τότε,
ἀλλ' ἐς μάχην ὁρμῶντες εὐψύχῳ θράσει·
σάλπιγξ δ' ἁπάντῃ πάντ' ἐκεῖν' ἐπέφλεγεν.

Perhaps, however, Mr. Hardy is reserving that thrill for Waterloo; and we believe the more in the national bearing which the play may ultimately have from his insistence on the words of Pitt's Guildhall speech. "Those words," says the Spirit of the Years (warming our cockles for once in a way),

Those words of this man Pitt—his last large words,
As I may prophesy—that ring to-night
In their first mintage to the feasters here,
Will spread with ageing, lodge, and crystallize,
And stand embedded in the English tongue
Till it grow thin, outworn, and cease to be.

Certainly we must wait to form any clear judgement of *The Dynasts* on the historical side.

We are left therefore to grapple with its philosophy—the "modern expression of a modern outlook" on history: and here another modern outlook on the same chapter of history so perfectly illustrates a contrast we believe to be at the root of all dramatic ideas that we may be forgiven for quoting from it at some length. The gist of all that George Meredith finds to say about Napoleon and Napoleon's legacy to France is based, as it seems to us, upon a belief in laws in one sense beyond the control of man (here he is at one with Hardy), but depending for their application on man's free acts. Here is a passage from the third *Ode*:—

Lo, Strength is of the plain root-Virtues born:
Strength shall ye gain by service, prove in scorn,
Train by endurance, by devotion shape.
Strength is not won by miracle or rape.
It is the offspring of the modest years,
The gift of sire to son, *thro' those firm laws*
Which we name Gods; which are the righteous cause,
The cause of man, and manhood's ministers.

The difference between his view and Hardy's seems, in fact, to spring from his belief in every man's and every nation's responsibility for its own deeds. He pictures France looking back in 1870:—

She sees what seed long sown, ripened of late,
Bears this fierce crop; and she discerns her fate
From origin to agony, and on
As far as the wave washes long and wan
Off one disastrous impulse: *for of waves*
Our life is, and our deeds are pregnant graves
Blown rolling to the sunset from the dawn.

It is no part of our intention here, we need hardly say, to compare Meredith's and Hardy's treatment of Napoleon as literature. Meredith is writing an ode, Hardy a play; and we are concerned only with their fundamental difference of view. Our argument, to bring it to a head (and we do so with all the diffidence and timidity in the world) is that some such belief as Meredith's runs through all great dramatic poetry. It stipulates, on the one side, free action, on the other, inexorable laws; and yet in the outcome of their conflict it leaves wide room for doubt. This doubt—the room for suspense, for hope and fear, while the great laws move to accomplishment—is surely of the essence of all great tragedy. It is the very pith of Aeschylus. He has, it is true, a strong predilection for calamities and dooms, and prefers to state the theory in that way—as it affects the unjust man rather than the just. There is, in fact, no sport to Aeschylus like watching a man stalked by his deserts. But the theory is still the same: writ vaguely, the same as Sophocles' or Shakespeare's or Wagner's; the same, we have said, as Meredith's. Free acts, fixed laws, and between them the debatable land, the μεταίχμιον σκότου (to apply Aeschylus's own phrase), the little more or little less in the memory of the Gods which turns the scale:—

Forgetful is green earth; the Gods alone
Remember everlastingly: they strike
Remorselessly, and ever like for like.
By their great memories the Gods are known.

There, surely, is the postulate of tragedy on a high plane. But freedom, law, and doubt (to come back to our play) are things of which *The Dynasts* will not admit. There is no freedom, no law, no doubt. We watch Napoleon take the crown of Lombardy, and speculate, with the Pities to aid us, on the tragic consequences of the act. It is no use, Years will not have it so:—

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS.

Officious sprite,
Thou'rt young, and dost not heed the Cause of things
Which some of us have inkled to thee here;
Else wouldst thou not have hailed the Emperor,
Whose acts do but outshape Its governing.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES.

I feel, Sire, as I must! This tale of Will
And Life's impulsion by Incognizance
I cannot take.

We cannot take it either, indeed, as the basis of a play, whatever its merits on other grounds. The scheme it engenders seems to us too many-sided, too full of antilogies: it makes us, and it mars us; it sets us on, and takes us off; it exalts and disheartens, inspires and revolts, delights and horrifies, crosses every feeling as soon as roused—and all to assure us that our feelings are for naught! Moral responsibility, our dramatic key-stone, is thrown to the ground. Whatever their dreams to the contrary, men feel and think and act to no result at all. That, indeed, is the only tragedy:—

The intolerable antilogy
Of making figments feel!

The Spirit of the Years unfolds the doctrine at length:—

The cognizance ye mourn, Life's doom to feel,
If I report it meetly, came unmeant,
Emerging with blind gropes from Impercipience
By random sequence—luckless, tragic Chance,
If ye will call it so. 'Twas needed not
In the economy of Vitality,
Which might have ever kept a sealed cognition
As doth the Will Itself.

That is the argument of the whole play, constantly enforced. The Spirits even quote Sophocles to attest it, and we have no space to join issue with them there. We have only tried to explain, with all humility, why perhaps a play that has all the appearance of great tragedy produced on us none of its effects. It may be that after many more readings of this and the other parts we shall see daylight through the scheme. For the moment, it leaves us disappointed and confused.

MR. DOOLEY IN CONVOCATION.

"WHERE d'ye think I was yisthredah, Hinnissy?" said Mr. Dooley. "In the Convocation of th' Univarsity of Oxford, no less."

"Sure, ye're always peeking in where ye're laste wanted," said Mr. Hennessy derisively; "ye must have filt like a buttherfly in an aquarium."

"'Tis little ye know of larned bodies, Hinnissy," replied the philosopher calmly, "I was niver more at home in me life. 'Twas the lively image of a Clan na Gael meeting whin there's throuble. Pahr-rsons bedad; but as lively a set of la-ads as iver r-ran a war-rd meeting in Chicago."

"An' what was't about?" said Hennessy, visibly interested.

"Well, they till me," said Mr. Dooley, "there was a la-ad

American Reviews
of The Dynasts. I.

3

The Dial, Chicago, Ill.

Date MAY 16 1904

*The Dynasts. A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars, in Three Parts, Nineteen Acts, and One Hundred and Thirty Scenes. By Thomas Hardy. Part First. New York: The Macmillan Co.

As Dr. Richard Strauss has endeavored to embody a metaphysical system in a symphonic composition, so Mr. Thomas Hardy has sought to express a philosophy of history in a closet-drama. Both feats are quite impossible of achievement upon the terms of the arts respectively involved, yet both produce deeply interesting results because of the powerful personalities which they exhibit. The symphonic poem throws little light upon the doctrines of Nietzsche-Zoroaster, but much upon the inner workings of the composer's mind; the historical drama likewise adds little to our insight into the Napoleonic wars, but does much to illuminate the point of view from which its author contemplates the significant happenings in the tragi-comedy of human life. It takes for its motto the words:

"And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and wrong,
And trumpets blown for wars."

It might even better have taken Matthew Arnold's familiar lines about Heine:

"The Spirit of the world,
Beholding the absurdity of men —
Their vaunts, their feats — let a sardonic smile
For one short moment, wander o'er his lips."

The word "short" in the quotation would hardly be applicable, for Mr. Hardy's portentous production extends to nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes, but the "sardonic smile" is everywhere in evidence, and "the spirit of the world" is one of the speaking characters of the drama.

The mere enumeration of these characters fills four pages of print, and one of the four is a list of the "phantom intelligences" who hover about the scene, and comment upon the action after the fashion of a Greek chorus. There is the Ancient Spirit of the Years, the Spirit of Pities, the Spirit of Rumour, and Spirits Sinister and Ironic, besides the Shade of the Earth and a sufficient number of Recording Angels. These ideal shapes are not kept mostly outside the main action, as in "Faust," but mingle with it at every point, and penetrate the scene with their intelligence. Their part is so important that we must quote in full the author's explanation of how he came to use them and what he intended should be their function in his artistic plan.

"It was thought proper to introduce, as supernatural spectators of the terrestrial drama, certain impersonated abstractions, or Intelligences, called Spirits. They are intended to be taken by the reader for what they may be worth as contrivances of the fancy merely. Their doctrines are but tentative, and are advanced with little eye to a systematized philosophy warranted to lift 'the burthen of the mystery' of this unintelligible world. The chief thing hoped for them is that they and their utterances may have dramatic plausibility enough to procure for them, in the words of Coleridge, 'that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith.' The wide prevalence of the Monistic theory of the Universe forbade, in this twentieth century, the importation of Divine personages from any antique Mythology as ready-made sources or channels of Causation, even in verse, and excluded the celestial machinery of, say, 'Paradise Lost,' as peremptorily as that of the 'Iliad' or the 'Eddas.' And the abandonment of the masculine pronoun in allusions to the First or Fundamental Energy seemed a necessary and logical consequence of the long abandonment by thinkers of the anthropomorphic conception of the same."

This explanation, which is also a confession of faith (of a lack of faith, some will say, with too great a readiness to jump at conclusions), is absolutely essential to any comprehension of the mood or temper in which the drama has been wrought; it sets the work apart from those others which likewise make use of supernatural machinery, but which use it in such a way as to give at least temporary credence to the concrete forms in which the outworn religions have shaped forth their envisagement of life's inmost meaning.

A great historical period, then, viewed on the one hand with the eye of the most minute and relentless realism, and on the other seen absolutely *sub specie æternitatis*, is what Mr. Hardy has given us in "The Dynasts," of which the first six acts are now published. That the eternal aspect of his theme, rather than the temporal aspect, is what chiefly concerns him, is a fact of which we are not permitted to doubt for a moment. He makes this perfectly clear in the scene of Napoleon's Coronation at Milan, where the dumb show of ceremonial becomes the subject of spiritual comment after the following fashion:

Spirit of the Pities.

"What is the creed that these rich rites disclose?

Spirit of the Years.

"A local thing called Christianity,
Which the wild dramas of this wheeling sphere
Include, with divers others such, in dim,
Pathetical, and brief parentheses;
Beyond whose reach, uninfluenced, unconcerned,
The systems of the suns go sweeping on
With all their many-mortaled planet train
In mathematic roll unceasingly.

Spirit of the Pities.

"I did not recognize it here, forsooth;
Though in its early, lovingkindly days
Of gracious purpose it was much to me."

From this point of view the mightiest figures in human history shrink to mere manikins, and the men who have convulsed the world seem no more than puppets controlled by a mysterious and inexorable destiny.

Perhaps three-fourths of the present volume is in the form of verse — blank verse for the dialogue of mortals, lyrical measures of various forms for the discourse of spirits. But the verse, whatever its form, is such as to defy all the conventional canons of poetic diction, being devoid of grace and melody, and having in their stead only sheer intellectual weight and merciless logic. Two more illustrations may be given besides those already introduced for illustration of the author's thought. Here are the words spoken by Pitt upon hearing the news of Austerlitz:

"O God that I should live to see this day!
'Defeated — the Allies — quite overthrown
At Austerlitz — last week.' — Where 's Austerlitz?
— But what avails it where the place is now;
What corpse is curious on the longitude
And situation of his cemetery! . . .
The Austrians and the Russians overcome,
That vast adventuring army is set free
To bend unhindered strength against our shores. . . .
So do my plans through all these plodding years
Announce them built in vain! . . .
His heel on Europe, monarchies in chains
To France, I am as though I had not been."

And here is part of the antiphonal song of the Recording Angels, chanted to "ærial music":

"Feeble-framed dull unresolve, unresourcefulness,
Sat in the halls of the Kingdom's high Councillors,
Whence an untactical torpid despondency
Weighed as with winter the national mind."

Surely such dactyls as these were never shaped before; that they are the utterance of an angelic voice seems to be one of the deepest of the ironies in the author's whole ironic scheme. Clearly this work must be taken on Mr. Hardy's own terms; the ordinary terms of literary art would compel its summary rejection, and it is quite impressive enough to force us to set those terms aside.

The conception of the historical Napoleon here presented is essentially just. It is that of the hero perverted until he has become the "man of mere traditions," that of the leader with whom

"The large potencies
Instilled into his idiosyncrasy —
To throne fair Liberty in Privilege's room —
Are taking taint, and sink to common plots
For his own gain."

The three figures of Napoleon, Nelson, and Pitt stand out far above the mass of historical characters that Mr. Hardy has brought into his drama. Women hardly appear in the foreground of the action, and few of them are even named in the long list of *dramatis personæ*. The section of the work now published may be summed up historically with the five words Milan, Boulogne, Ulm, Trafalgar, and Austerlitz. The Peninsular War will be the central theme of the second section, with Jena and Wagram for subjects of secondary interest. Moscow, Elba, and Waterloo will be the capital headings of the third and concluding section, followed by an epilogue in a Wessex village, and an "after scene" in "the over-world," to match the "fore scene" with which the work is opened. The programme which gives us this outline ends with a note to the effect that the remaining sections are "in hand," although "their publication is not guaranteed." We trust that they may see the light. So grandiose a plan, conceived by so forceful and distinguished a writer, could not suffer frustration without the world's being left the poorer.

CLEVELAND, O.—PLAIN DEALER.

Date FEB 19 1904

The Mistakes of Thomas Hardy.

Mr. Thomas Hardy was not well-advised when he gathered into a volume his "Wessex Poems" and demonstrated that the author of "Far From the Madding Crowd" and more than a dozen other popular tales was far from being as good a poet as he was novelist. He was still worse advised when he recently gave to the world the first section of that elongated and discontinuous panoramic drama, "The Dynasts." His latest mistake is his worst, and shakes faith in the good sense he was at one time credited with having.

With almost unanimous accord those critics who took the pains—and the word is used advisedly—to read through so much as has been published of that astonishing drama have expressed their dissatisfaction and their surprise that he should have perpetrated such a literary blunder. At home, among his literary friends, the condemnation has been as severe as in this country where personal feelings in no way biased or prejudiced the verdict. Mr. Hardy has made the mistake of "writing to the papers" in protest against the manner in which "The Dynasts" has been received by them. He insists the critics did not know what they were talking about. He defends his use of the dramatic form even though there might be difficulties in the way of putting such a work on the stage. He maintains that the story reads better than it would have done as a novel or as an epic poem, and that its disjointedness is in fact a merit instead of a defect.

Poems, drama and letter furnish cumulative evidence that Thomas Hardy did unwisely when he quit novel writing to use his pen in other fields. It is another illustration of the saying coming down from antiquity that "the cobbler should stick to his last."

DENVER, COL.—REPUBLICAN.

Date FEB 14 1904

THE first part of Thomas Hardy's world's tragedy, "The Dynasts," which has just been issued, is no doubt going to create a sensation. A more daring and unique work has not come from the brain of any poet in years. And as literature it is evident "The Dynasts" is going to set the world talking [illegible]

It is to be hoped that Mr. Hardy will withhold the publication of the remaining parts no longer than he deems necessary to satisfy his own sense of the artistic. There are so many fine, strong scenes in the first part of his drama that to leave the great Napoleonic play in an unfinished state would be regrettable. Literature demands that Mr. Hardy finish the work he has begun. In the meantime the first part of "The Dynasts" will no doubt take its place in the van of recent heroic efforts in poetry. There is nothing in the work of Stephen Phillips that equals it for grandeur of sweep, or for the poetic beauty of many of its lines. In much of the conversation of the spirits in the overworld there is manifested an erudition in philosophic thinking which will surprise those who thought that Hardy had sounded his own depths in his earlier literary efforts. If the remaining [illegible] of "The Dynasts" are equal to the [illegible] part in conception and execution [illegible] no doubt that the great drama [illegible] its place permanent as [illegible] literary masterpieces of [illegible] century. [illegible]

Tribune, New York City.

Date JAN 23 1904

GENIUS MISAPPLIED.

Thomas Hardy's Vain Attempt to Write a Great Drama.

THE DYNASTS. A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars, in Three Parts, Nineteen Acts, and One Hundred and Thirty Scenes. By Thomas Hardy. Part I. 12mo, pp. xxii, 228. The Macmillan Company.

As the greatest of living novelists Mr. Hardy is sure of an audience, no matter what he chooses to write. But to read a new book of his with sympathetic attention is one thing, to applaud it is quite another. We have read "The Dynasts" with interest, but we cannot praise it. We can only marvel at the author's complacency in taxing, with a work of the kind, the patience of those who have hitherto delighted to do him honor. Loyalty to a man of genius dies hard, for it is compounded not only of belief in him, but of gratitude for all that he has done. Ever since the publication of Mr. Hardy's masterpiece, "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," in 1891, it has been difficult to quarrel with the products of his pen. Who would not grant, to the maker of such a contribution to English literature, occasional indulgence in the harmless pleasure of versification? His two volumes of poems, published respectively in 1898 and 1901, have been amiably received. The gleams of merit in them have received appreciative consideration, for all that they have been but gleams, supplying no warrant for the assumption that Mr. Hardy is a born poet. Yet there is a point at which critical good nature becomes critical weakness, and to forgive Mr. Hardy "The Dynasts" would be feebly to admit that, in letters, questions of good and bad do not count.

It is easy to understand how he came to write this amazing welter of words. The career of Napoleon has touched his imagination, and, musing on the tangled theme, he has vaguely dramatized his reflections, has seen them, with the mind's eye, taking form in swaying groups of figures and in shifting scenes. The thoughtful reader of history can hardly avoid thus visualizing the episodes that pass before his inner sight; with any one who is not dull of comprehension, some such process is inevitable. Cause and effect are set before us on the printed page and we unconsciously humanize them, so to say, realizing for ourselves a kind of pageant out of the material which the historian has placed at our disposal. Now to hear in familiar talk what Mr. Hardy might have to say about the affairs of the world as Napoleon affected them could not but be entertaining, and no one could blame him if, in preparation for such talk, he were to jot down a kind of scenario on which to draw as an aid to memory. But when he undertakes to make of this scenario a thing to stand by itself and to be read, we must ask him to observe two conditions. In the first place he ought to say something new and suggestive, and, secondly, he ought to say it in terms of good poetry or prose. In "The Dynasts" Mr. Hardy is not exclusively a poet, an historian, a playwright or a moralist, but endeavors to be something of all four, with the result that the work is a fearsome hybrid, lacking all unity and charm. He does what he can to break his fall. In the course of a preface some seven or eight pages long he confesses that "in devising this chronicle piece no attempt has been made to create that completely organic structure of action, and closely webbed development of character and motive, which are demanded in a drama strictly self-contained." Going on to state that the spectator, being familiar with the general subject, can himself supply, if he is willing, what is necessary "to combine the whole gaunt framework into an artistic unity," he adds this quaint remark: "Should he refuse to do this, a historical presentment on an intermittent plan, in which the dramatis personæ number some hundreds, exclusive of crowds and armies, becomes in his individual case unsuitable." It depends altogether upon what the author gives the spectator to go upon.

Assuming that he is willing to take all possible trouble to help Mr. Hardy over the stile, what does the latter do to meet him half way? He gives him, in the first place, a list of six acts, comprising altogether thirty-five scenes. Then he indicates that the action will implicate a considerable number of "Phantom Intelligences," including "The Ancient Spirit of the Years," "Spirits Sinister and Ironic," "The Shade of the [illegible]," "Recording Angels," and so on, adding [illegible] two pages of "Persons of the Drama." [illegible] leads off with a "Fore Scene," laid [illegible] Overworld," and in this scene the "phantom intelligences" aforesaid are represented as [illegible] down on the European earth and discoursing, in elliptical and obscure phrases, on what they see. What they see, and what they continue to comment upon as the drama proceeds, is the disturbance created amid the states of Europe and in England by Napoleon, the first phases of that disturbance which are exhibited being those dating from the earlier months of 1805. The idea of the writer has been to show us how the British were affected by rumors of the threatened invasion of their country; how Napoleon set his forces in motion; how he was baffled on the high seas, and how he won triumphs on land. We listen to the talk of travellers, soldiers and peasants on Wessex roads, or we are taken into the House of Commons to hear Sheridan and Pitt. The stratagem which Napoleon ordered Villeneuve to execute is shown as it formed itself in the mind of the great commander; and with a changing of the scene we are made partners in Nelson's destruction of the French fleet. As the book draws to a close the battle of Austerlitz is exploited, and this is followed by the death of Pitt. We need not enumerate all the episodes that intervene between the first and the last of the thirty-five scenes. They are so many slices out of Napoleonic and British history.

In his treatment of each one, using largely the "phantom intelligences" we have mentioned as voices in a species of debate, Mr. Hardy contrives to convey certain fairly definite ideas, as, for example, that Napoleon was a selfish and ambitious man, that Pitt loved his country, that Nelson was a hero, and that the English were not, in their attitude toward the enemy, invariably as farseeing and discreet as they were courageous. Also, and this is perhaps the most characteristic line taken in the book, it is urged in season and out of season that all the actors in the great drama were but puppets moved by "the Immanent Will." Though the preface begins with the statement that "the Drama here presented is concerned with the Great Historical Calamity, or Clash of Peoples, artificially brought about some hundred years ago," the whole drift of the author's argument goes to show that the "Peoples" were moved by a power above, a transaction that hardly savors of things artificially or fortuitously brought about. Obviously there is nothing new here. We have gained no insight into the Napoleonic wars through Mr. Hardy's ministrations. Waiving that point, and looking for felicities of style, we are, if anything, more grievously disappointed. In this formless, cloudy play, reminding us of nothing so much as of one of William Blake's amorphous productions, there is scarce a glimmer of poetic feeling, there is scarce a hint of poetic diction. Venturing upon a scheme that would demand a sort of Miltonic breadth and grandeur for its proper evolution, Mr. Hardy fills his pages with humdrum dialogue, with blank verse that is again and again simply prose cut up into lengths. Scrutinizing the work with the utmost care, with eagerness to find some passage vibrant with emotion or touched with color, the best lines we can discover are these, supposed to be written by Napoleon:

I am resolved that no wild dream of Ind,
And what we there might win; or of the West,
And bold reconquest there of Surinam
And other Dutch retreats along those coasts,
Or British islands nigh, shall draw me now
From piercing into England through Boulogne
As lined in my first plan. If I do strike,
I strike effectively; to forge which feat
There's but one way—planting a mortal wound
In England's heart—the very English land—
Whose insolent and cynical reply
To my well based complaint on breach of faith
Concerning Malta, as at Amiens pledged,
Has lighted up anew such flames of ire
As may involve the world.

Mere rhetoric of this sort will not furnish forth a drama of colossal dimensions, and it is of such rhetoric that "The Dynasts" is in great part made. There is more stuff in the book that is not even so well written. There is a faint flicker of the ballad quality in some sea staves placed at the close of the fifth act, a song of Trafalgar given to some boatmen, but it is only a flicker. There is one scene in which, for a moment, we are consoled for the disappointments in this volume. The old peasants guarding the beacon on Egdon Heath, in the second act, show plainly the hand of the writer of the immortal Wessex novels. But here again it is only for a moment that we are beguiled. Taking "The Dynasts" as a whole, it is weak and pompous, and it carries the reader nowhere. Affixed to a table of contents of the second and third parts of the drama, which is printed at the back of the book, is a note in which the author says that these are "in hand," but that their publication "is not guaranteed." It is sincerely to be hoped that Mr. Hardy will put no further instalments of this work into book form. It is unworthy of his genius. Another novel as great as "Tess" would put the world only the more deeply in his debt. It would be welcomed with rejoicing. But if he is not inclined to write any more fiction, we submit that it would be better for his fame if he were to remain silent, and enjoy the repose which he has done so much to deserve.

Nation, New York

Date FEB 25 1904

From such thin reed notes to the "clamorque virum clangorque tubarum" which fill Mr. Thomas Hardy's Napoleonic drama, 'The Dynasts' (Macmillan) is a far cry. 'The Dynasts' is an emprise that makes even Prof. Shaler's pentalogy of which we lately had to speak seem puny. The present volume is the first of three which will present "the Great Historical Calamity or Clash of Peoples, artificially brought about some hundred years ago," in nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes. In his preface Mr. Hardy affirms his intention to write a closet drama, for closet drama, he is inclined to think, is the ultimate type of all drama, and, indeed, the only one suited to a meditative world which is "older, more invidious, more nervous, more quizzical than it once was." This is a ticklish assumption, and it may be gravely doubted whether a nervous and quizzical world will be anything but regretful that a writer of Mr. Hardy's power should leave a field in which he was acknowledged master to produce a work so uncouth and forbidding as 'The Dynasts.' The question for us is, How far is the performance poetic? The first expedient adopted by Mr. Hardy toward the idealization essential to poetry is the old one of supernatural machinery. He introduces certain Phantom Intelligences, The Ancient Spirit of the Years, The Spirit of the Pities, Spirits Sinister and Ironic, etc. These spirits give utterance to superhumanly pessimistic sentiments in a style quite superhuman. We have, for example, this description of the attitude of the Creative Will, whom Mr. Hardy prefers to style "It":

"It lends Its heed
To other worlds, being wearied out with this;
Wherefore Its mindlessness of earthly woes.
Some, too, have told at whiles that rightfully
Its warefulness, Its care, this planet lost
When in her early growth and crudity
By bad, mad acts of severance men contrived,
Working such nescience by their own device."

The expressions of the Phantom Intelligences never have the lyrical melody which has sometimes sufficed to make such utterances convincing; and it may be said categorically that they do not fulfil Mr. Hardy's hope, and cause "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith." The mortal characters are little better. The talk in prose of the Wessex peasantry which occurs intermittently throughout the piece has the glamour and tang of literature; but the poetic dialogue in very pedestrian blank verse, wherein we are introduced to the House of Commons, the Council Chamber of Napoleon, or the cockpit of the *Victory*, is interesting chiefly from the weight of the action understood to be passing. Yet, when all has been said, the piece is poetically effective in precisely the way which might have been expected from the impressive intellectuality that has marked the novels of Mr. Hardy, as well as his strong, harsh verse. The means of presenting the action has something of the sublime. The reader is deified by the stage directions into a spectator sitting above the clouds, which unroll first to the one side, then to the other, offering panoramically to his view the great events which are passing on the wide stage of Europe and the adjacent seas. At times, by these stage directions, his gaze is made as intensive as it is extensive, and the result is a vision of the world in which the idealism of Carlyle, the scientific monism of Spencer, and the pessimism of Mr. Hardy queerly, yet effectively, blend. Thus, before Austerlitz, we are told:

"*The silent insect-creep of the Austrian columns towards the banks of the Inn continues to be seen until the view fades to nebulousness and dissolves.*"

And at the climax of the battle we are granted a "weird seizure" of almost ghastly vividness:

"*At once, as earlier, a preternatural clearness possesses the atmosphere of the battlefield, in which the scene becomes anatomized and the living masses of humanity transparent. The controlling Immanent Will appears therein as a brainlike network of currents and ejections, twitching, interpenetrating, entangling, and thrusting hither and thither the human forms.*"

This is the kind of quasi-poetic vision which gives 'The Dynasts' unity and—for all its uncouthness—power. It is the poetry of wonder in a larger kind. It is not wonder at the beauty of the rose, or the purity of maidenhood, or even at the mystery of death. It is wonder of the Lucretian sort that Mr. Hardy foreshadowed in a memorable passage in his 'Two on a Tower.' It is the emotion which comes to a man without religious faith when he passes in imagination beyond the flaming ramparts of the world into the bottomless universe of science. How far this impulse will avail toward making Mr. Hardy's completed trilogy a work of art, it is not safe to affirm. From the present portion, however, it seems likely that his lack of control over his medium will keep the work from quite conforming to any conceivable or valid æsthetic standard. It is likely, if completed, to remain one of those pieces of imaginative incunabula which, marking as they do the thought of a moody age, are made in time the basis of better work by better workmen.

KANSAS CITY "STAR"
JULY 13. 1904.

HARDLY MR. HARDY.

One of the most tremendous failures of recent literature is Mr. Thomas Hardy's drama of the Napoleonic wars, "The Dynasts." The volume is the first of a triology, "intended for mental performance only," concerning itself for the most part with "English influence and action throughout the struggle," which Mr. Hardy conceived to have been slighted teasingly by continental writers. In choosing the dramatic form for his treatise—no more grateful word will quite encompass it—the author has seen fit to include a long-winded and distinctly obscure preface, in which he declares his faith in a "First or Fundamental Energy" in place of a Christian God. This overshadowing bogey is accompanied in the play by a harassing crew of satellites of whom the Shade of the Earth, the Spirit of the Years, the Spirit of the Pities, the Spirit of Sinister, and the Spirit of Rumour, each attended by a private chorus for scenes more than commonly impressive, are especially loud voiced. His work is done in poetry of a kind recalling the admired crazy-quilts of our grandmothers and proves redolent of humor that is not amusing and tragedy that wholly fails to convince. Indeed, if anything more amazingly impertinent than the manner in which his loafing deities interrupt mortal converse, or more wearisomely dull than the nature of that mundane converse itself, has been done in recent years, it has been the good fortune of most readers to have failed to fall upon it.

However, it is Mr. Hardy's due to have one half-redeeming feature of his complicated scheme dwelt upon in Christian charity. The constant shift of scene he employs—there are six acts and thirty-six scenes in this Part I—makes a rapid bird's-eye view of battlefields quite possible and like the promised food-pill of the ultra-hygienists is warranted to accelerate a commonly too slow digestion. Mr. Hardy has found, however, that it is a difficult matter to write swiftly inclusive dialogue; and so at close intervals he has inserted stage directions that quickly assume undue importance and prove the most illuminating and characteristic portions of his performance. The following, culled at random, is a good example of their style:

> The nether sky opens, and Europe is disclosed as a prone and emaciated figure, the Alps shaping like a backbone, and the branching mountain chains like ribs, the peninsular plateau of Spain forming a head. Broad and lengthy lowlands stretch from the North of France across Russia like a gray-green garment hemmed by the Ural mountains and the glistening Arctic ocean.
>
> The point of view then sinks downward through space and draws near to the surface of the perturbed countries, where the peoples, distressed by events which they did not cause, are seen writhing, crawling, heaving and vibrating in their various cities and nationalities.

Could anything more pleasingly confirm Mr. Hardy's promise concerning "mental performance only!"

And yet all this is not a matter for flippant jest. When a great man loses himself in dust-dry persiflage and mystic mechanism, his embroilment becomes the calamity of his race. The brain that conceived "Ethelberta" and "Eustacia Rye," "Sue Brodhead" and the incomparable "Tess," is a racial property ill spared to its individual keeper. Indeed, he has no more right to prostitute it to personal whim than to take his own life. No sadder event occurs in literary history than when a great artist begins to take himself seriously, in the sense of believing the meanings foolish people inevitably read into his work; when he bows down to his talent as a part of himself, not as a separate endowment of which he ought to stand in trembling awe. George Eliot lived always in fear of the cessation of her powers and most of her best work was done beneath that dread. For she realized that her genius was *not herself* and she, perhaps more than anyone else, was its most constant worshipper. And so one cannot but acknowledge that Mr. Hardy's sorry plight is a misfortune, very closely allied to literary tragedy.

The Macmillan company publish "The Dynasts" at $1.50. SELLERS EDWARDS.

[March 26, 1904

THE LITERARY DIGEST (U.S.A)

THE HARDIHOOD OF MR. HARDY.

THE DYNASTS. By Thomas Hardy. Cloth, 5 x 7½ in., 228 pp. Price, $1.50 net. The Macmillan Company.

MR. THOMAS HARDY, in his latest work, "The Dynasts," has set a doughty task to the critic. It is serenely set forth on the title-page as "A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars, in Three Parts, Nineteen Acts and One Hundred and Thirty Scenes." This may well make any one pause and breathe hard. But a study of Part First—which is all that this volume contains, and it is the only one in print as yet—renders the prospect still more appalling. The *dramatis personæ* number one hundred and thirty-five, and, as if this were not enough, there are introduced phantom intelligences, five in number, with spirit messengers and recording angels. After which one is relieved to find that Mr. Hardy avows in his Preface that "The Dynasts" is intended simply "for mental performance." There is a fore-scene in the overworld, and the stage settings, which are highly colored specimens of descriptive writing, would convince an idiot that this ponderous drama could not be put upon any boards. "Effects" are circumstantially outlined which make the stage mechanism of "Parsifal" seem as simple as the unfolding of a sweet-brier rose.

"A new and penetrating light descends on the spectacle, enduing men and things with a seeming transparency, and exhibiting as one organism the anatomy of life and movement in all humanity and vitalized matter included in the display."

From this First Part of "The Dynasts" it is patent that Mr. Hardy selected his theme with special consideration for a luxuriously intimate exposure of his attitude toward man's destiny and toward the Primal Cause of all things. His conception of the "Immanent Will" is unrighteous to the degree of blasphemy, regarded from the Christian standpoint, and its Poe-like uncanniness is saved from being blood-curdling only by its fatuity. The Greek notion of the avenging gods is sanity compared with this nightmare of an all-moving but listless "It" that has gangrened an Englishman's brain.

In "Life's Little Ironies" Mr. Hardy has previously given a clear idea of his position as to this primal agency, and it was bitterly pessimistic. In one of the poems, called "Hap," he avers that, could he but feel himself the tortured butt of some vengeful god, "then would I bear, and clench myself and die, steeled by the sense of ire unmerited." But the reality, according to his conception, is not even as soothing as this, for he goes on to say:

> ". . . How arrives it joy lies slain,
> And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
> *Crass Casualty* obstructs the sun and rain,
> And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan.
> . . . .
> These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
> Blisses about my pilgrimmage as pain."

This idea is brought out in "The Dynasts" at greater length, with insistent suggestion of Mr. Hardy's baleful plight in the grip of such morbid conception. One is minded to deal out to him the service of the practical hostess in Henry V.: "Now I, to comfort him, bid him a' should not think of God." He would certainly be not only happier himself, and more philosophical, but far more grateful to his fellow men were he to ban the subject utterly from his brain and lips. This idea, however, is the paramount one in "The Dynasts." He takes the horrors of war, precipitated by that sublime *parvenu*, Napoleon, as an object-lesson of the insensate juggling of his malignant, prepotent "It."

As for the literary quality of this lengthy work, he composes his Brobdignagian mosaic with strenuous, artistic patience. The imagination is filled with the character of the scenes, and the action is vivid, realistic, and synthesized in an able manner. As poetry, it is grandiose to turgidity in its style, with scant appeal to the higher emotions. Napoleon's intention of utilizing marine forces for the subjugation of England plays a large part in this first instalment of "The Dynasts," and the battle of Trafalgar is graphically pictured. It concludes with the death of Pitt.

But the most interesting point for consideration is the Preface, for there Mr. Hardy gives the *raison d'être* of this portentous drama. Owing to his familiarity with the part of England most agitated by the prospect of "Bony's" descent upon Albion, a section in which George III. had a summer residence, and where Hardy, Nelson's flag-captain at Trafalgar, was born, he was led to write "The Trumpet-Major," in 1879. Hardy found then that he was "in the tantalizing position of having touched the fringe of a vast international tragedy, without being able, through limits of plan, knowledge, and opportunity, to enter farther into its events." Six years ago he outlined "The Dynasts," and has been at work on it, at odd intervals, ever since. He felt that continental writers had paid provokingly slight regard to English influence and action throughout that struggle.

As to his introduction of "certain impersonated abstractions, or intelligences, called spirits," after saying that "they are intended to be taken by the reader for what they may be worth as *contrivances of the fancy merely*," with the further remark that "their doctrines are but tentative, and are advanced with little eye to a systemized philosophy warranted to lift 'the burthen of the mystery' of this unintelligible world," he adds that "the chief thing hoped for them is that they and their utterances may have dramatic plausibility enough to procure for them, in the words of Coleridge, "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith."

This apologetic attitude toward the introduction of supernatural agencies does not chime in with the brazen forwardness with which Mr. Hardy exploits his monstrous conception of the primal all-doer. The spirits are introduced merely to bring out concisely and with shifty cunning the inherent atrocity of this supreme Caliban. Mr. Hardy says "the scheme of contrasted choruses and other conventions of this external feature was shaped with a single view to the modern expression of a modern outlook." In this same spirit of advanced modernity, which, happily, seems represented by Mr. Hardy alone, he speaks of his grewsome primal force as "It." He courteously accounts for this also: "The abandonment of the masculine pronoun in allusions to the first or fundamental energy seemed a necessary and logical consequence of the long abandonment by thinkers of the anthropomorphic conception of the same." The derogatory character of Mr. Hardy's appellative is slight aspersion on God composed to the horrible essence ascribed to Him. It is not too much to assert that the author is writing this drama for the sake of relieving his mind of the grisly phantom that weighs upon it so heavily. Were such an omnipotent monster personal and volent, mankind might have the grim pleasure of cursing him, as Mr. Hardy says he would do. But Mr. Hardy makes him an utterly irresponsible agent, who doesn't know what he is doing! It is a remarkable production, but an unwholesome one.

The Standard. New York
April 2. 1904

"The Dynasts."

By Thomas Hardy. New York: The Macmillan Company.

Readers of "Jude the Obscure" and "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" know something of Mr. Hardy's philosophy of life. It is suggested in almost every line of his novels and poems, but nowhere does it appear with such power and challenge as in this new adventure, "The Dynasts," with its commingling of noble melancholy and catholic compassion. The work is based upon Napoleon's wars in the early nineteenth century, and proposes to survey their earthly meanings and celestial relationships through nineteen acts and 130 scenes. Plainly, Mr. Hardy has slight thought of the stage; indeed, he enters at the outset a vigorous and soundly critical plea for the literary or closet drama as a permanent form of art and as logically the truest dramaturgy, the theater being only an incident—and a rather tiresome one at that—in the career of the poetic spirit. He finds in the Napoleonic nightmare striking and effective illustrations of the part played in human affairs by Fate, Nemesis, the Over-Soul, name it as we will. Mr. Hardy prefers the pronoun. To his "It" we are all keyed. "It" seems to be above both love and hatred, p[illegible] or care, and all things are in and of Its organism. It is "the controlling Immanent Will," and all we are Its "tentative dreams," its "potencies."

Of the author's literary skill there can be no question. His diction, devices and "atmospheres" are extraordinarily well done. His appreciation of "moments," too, and his fine relish for a difficult situation are good to feel. Nor is his philosophy so [illegible] as is commonly supposed. It is manly in essence—"Play the game," whether because you have to or choose to, for it is worth the playing. Besides, implicit in the entire drama is the suggestion of the growth of something in "It" corresponding to compassion, perhaps to [illegible]—the Spirit of the Years being older by many æons than the Spirit of the Pities.

Puck (New York) 5

Far from the Madding Crowd

An Interview with Hardy by Osiris Cob

The greatest book on this war—on any war—was written before the war. It is "The Dynasts," by Thomas Hardy. He, with Tolstoi, has grasped the meaning of War because he divines the nothingness of man—and the implacability of Law. But Thomas Hardy's vision is profounder than the Russian's because the Englishman is the pure artist, and the Russian is a moralist. One is an Olympian; and the other, in spite of his great art, is a pamphlateer.

Like the Hindu sages, Hardy has seen the will-to-error that is the kernel of all things.

He has daringly peered into the face of the Spirit Ironic, grand impresario of Things Temporal.

He has looked into the vacant stare of Isis.

Like Sophocles, he has sensed the life of the race in the Unconscious.

Like Hugo, he has raked down the fires of the Suns and found only ashes.

Like Schopenhauer, he has felt the fatality of each heart beat.

Like Shakespeare, he has played stage manager only to his puppets and left the moral of the tragedy to—God.

Like the author of Ecclesiastes, he has pronounced Nada!

But like Shelley, Thomas Hardy has, too, pronounced that most religious Why, and, like Goethe, demanded "More light!"

An interview with the seer of Max Gote is like an interview with the profoundest depths of the soul—for this man is not a pleasant thinker, but a daring eagle of the Suns.

His "The Dynasts" is the Iliad of Man—this mote marooned on a dried sun-flake buzzing on an unknown ecliptic.

I asked him about "war and history." But he said, "Let us talk about history, for this war is only a branch of something else."

"History must be lived," he said. "It cannot be written. All the paper in the world would not contain the events of a minute.

"What do we know of history? What do we know of war—this war, any war? There are as many Luthers, Napoleons or Kaisers as there are human temperaments. Right and wrong are angels of feeling, not things.

"There are no facts; there are only beliefs. Who won at Waterloo? Maybe Napoleon did. Do you know that he did not conquer? Look at Europe to-day!

"Tell me the secret of the violet and I will tell you the secret of everything—history, war, death, life, Fate.

"All history is a supreme paradox. Each thing breeds its opposite. Robespierre was as necessary to France as Joan of Arc. The Unconscious and the Master Spirit Ironic use *everything* to bring about its gorgeous, mysterious and tremendous effects.

"The hot, steaming imagination throws off its moons which it calls 'facts.' Grote had an idea; and that idea had an echo, and he called the echo 'A History of Greece.' Is there a history of England? No. There is Hallam's England, Macaulay's England, Green's England.

"It is only the artist that can grasp history. Only an artist will write the history of this war — a Homer, a Dante, a Hugo, a Shakespeare.

"Historians take a thousand 'facts,' pin them together, blow into them a philosophic theory. Presto! history!

"But the artist puts clothes on ghosts—the gods, the Principalities and the Dominations that rule our destinies. Presto! You have the eternal work of art.

"The historian—so-called—is a tailor to dead men. He is a doctor. The past is his clinic; and he lectures over his own Frankenstein. But Life is profounder than any theory. The artist knows this. Therefore he writes the history of the race and its wars from his tent in the etheric domains of his brain.

"Not to be is the only hell man ever feared. Lashed, branded, stoned, bludgeoned, kicked and cuffed from hell to hell, from one catastrophe to another; spat upon by nature, vomited back into life out of the ground where he had been laid, caring no more about dying at the Pole—his glory consists in those very things for which we condemn him. He fears nothing except Nothing. In other words, he can stand anything but boredom.

"And they all believe—all these races—that they are 'chosen.' Useful belief. Each individual believes the same thing—privately. It is all part of the mechanism of motion decreed by the Eternal Jester—if he is such.

"Each generation stands waiting the operalytic formula. The human race viewed from the Fourth Dimension is merely a case of planetary paranoia.

"There is nothing more sentimental than war. History is all sentiment. To 'create new values' a lie is necessary—a lie that shall be strong enough to found Kingdoms and Cathedrals, lazerretos, pension lists, Inquisitions and Reigns of Terror. This magical lie must be strong enough to glorify the paranoia of a Joan of Arc, the epilepsy of a Caesar, the saddism of a Robespierre, a mania of a Napoleon, the pride of a Luther, the cant of a War Lord and the prayers of a Czar.

"War! History! They are parts of the sublime 'Movie' organized on Olympus—or in Hell. I do not know which."

"'Movies' for the detectation of whom?" I asked.

"For gods, artists and little children, the latter of whom shall some day look on this war as a beautiful fairy tale," he concluded.

He has looked into the vacant stare of Isis

CHICAGO, ILL.—TRIBUNE
Date FEB 27 1904

THOMAS HARDY'S "THE DYNASTS"

First of a Napoleonic Trilogy, Reviewed by Ella W. Peattie.

THE critics have, I believe, been not a little diverted by the latest performance of Thomas Hardy. It is a drama—a drama with some of the characteristics of an epic—in three volumes and 139 scenes. The title is "THE DYNASTS" (Harper & Bros.), the subject the Napoleonic wars; the reason for being the same that impelled Homer to write of the siege of Troy. Like Homer, Mr. Hardy has his dealings with Olympus, or the "Overworld," as he more fitly calls it, and this place he has filled with a Chorus of Pities, Choruses of Sinister and Ironic Spirits, a Chorus of Rumors, a Chorus of the Years, and their respective Avatars, not to mention the Recording Angels, Spirit Messengers, etc., etc.

I am not any more amused at such a performance from a contemporary man than I am at such achievements from men long buried, and it does not seem to me that any person, even though he be a critic, should be in haste to ally himself with the Chorus of Ironic Spirits. Mr. Hardy has an independent way of thinking, and he has thought and felt much. He has now reached a sort of Overworld himself, even as Tolstoi has and as Sabatier did. He is on a high plane, and can look down upon men with a certain feeling of impersonality, even "as the gods above us." But it is characteristic of the author of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," and of "Jude the Obscure," that he should make his Chorus of Pities strong and sweet. He is not one to view sinking ships and drowning men with that impassive interest which, we are led to believe, was the chief possession of the insolent gods of old Olympus.

Mr. Hardy's two remaining volumes may, possibly, not be written. A note at the end of the present book says they are in hand, but their publication is not assured. The scenario is indicated by the table of contents, published in advance and subject to revision. But Mr. Hardy will do serious injustice to himself and greatly disappoint a respectful audience if he does not complete this work. It is an ancient idea with him, and he has now the leisure to finish it according to his fancy. The taint of money will not lie in any degree upon this undertaking. It should be the ripe, disinterested labor of a man who has always had a genius for getting at the human soul, and who, in dealing with this great subject of the Napoleonic wars in a psychological manner, undertakes a large emprise. Carlyle knew the importance of it. He tried to rise to it. He expressed himself upon the subject in impassioned apostrophes, which it pleased a dull time to term history. He knew that some inner soul of meaning lay in that revolt of the peoples, something not turbulence, something never entirely formulated, something so vast, so resonant, so stirring that the sounds of it were never quite to die out.

To attempt a review of Mr. Hardy's work upon this one volume is for me an impossibility, however easy it may have been for more accomplished reviewers. He appears to me to have set forth the proposition merely, and the one strong impression it leaves on my mind is Pitt's broken heart and his sad words after Austerlitz:

"Roll up that map. 'Twill not be needed now.
These ten years. Realms, laws, peoples, dynasties,
Are churning to a pulp within the maw
Of empire making Lust and personal Gain!"

I could have wished myself that the spirit of Jean Jacques Rousseau had been shadowed forth in Hardy's Overworld—that vacillating spirit, for which the Choruses of Sinister and Pitiful Spirits might have continually contended; a man with visions so much better than his soul, and with utterances of a nobility to which he could seldom attain. If ever a spirit was fitted to thrash through long purgatorial experiences it was that of Jean Jacques, half-demon, half-angel, pointing a way so bold that men who followed it reached either some uttermost place of compassion and patience and loveliness, or else some horrent confusion in which the guillotine established the equality of death, since no higher form of it seemed obtainable.

Would it not be wise to withhold judgment from "The Dynasts" till the two additional volumes appear? It is, self-evidently, a new Play of Man, and man at a time of New Birth, in which America found her religion of individuality—the code by which we move and have our free and happy being.

This being the psychological proposition, the book seems worth reading, and the coming volumes worth waiting for. At least, were they alive, so would have thought Auguste Comte and Camille Des Moulins.

ELLA W. PEATTIE.

Literary Digest, New York.
Date MAR 26 1904

THE HARDIHOOD OF MR. HARDY.

THE DYNASTS. By Thomas Hardy. Cloth, 5 x 7½ in., 228 pp. Price, $1.50 net. The Macmillan Company.

MR. THOMAS HARDY, in his latest work, "The Dynasts," has set a doughty task to the critic. It is serenely set forth on the title-page as "A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars, in Three Parts, Nineteen Acts and One Hundred and Thirty Scenes." This may well make any one pause and breathe hard. But a study of Part First—which is all that this volume contains, and it is the only one in print as yet—renders the prospect still more appalling. The *dramatis personæ* number one hundred and thirty-five, and, as if this were not enough, there are introduced phantom intelligences, five in number, with spirit messengers and recording angels. After which one is relieved to find that Mr. Hardy avows in his Preface that "The Dynasts" is intended simply "for mental performance." There is a fore-scene in the overworld, and the stage settings, which are highly colored specimens of descriptive writing, would convince an idiot that this ponderous drama could not be put upon any boards. "Effects" are circumstantially outlined which make the stage mechanism of "Parsifal" seem as simple as the unfolding of a sweet-brier rose.

"A new and penetrating light descends on the spectacle, enduing men and things with a seeming transparency, and exhibiting as one organism the anatomy of life and movement in all humanity and vitalized matter included in the display."

From this First Part of "The Dynasts" it is patent that Mr. Hardy selected his theme with special consideration for a luxuriously intimate exposure of his attitude toward man's destiny and toward the Primal Cause of all things. His conception of the "Immanent Will" is unrighteous to the degree of blasphemy, regarded from the Christian standpoint, and its Poe-like uncanniness is saved from being blood-curdling only by its fatuity. The Greek notion of the avenging gods is sanity compared with this nightmare of an all-moving but listless "It" that has gangrened an Englishman's brain.

In "Life's Little Ironies" Mr. Hardy has previously given a clear idea of his position as to this primal agency, and it was bitterly pessimistic. In one of the poems, called "Hap," he avers that, could he but feel himself the tortured butt of some vengeful god, "then would I bear, and clench myself and die, steeled by the sense of ire unmerited." But the reality, according to his conception, is not even as soothing as this, for he goes on to say:

". . . How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan.
. . . . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimmage as pain."

This idea is brought out in "The Dynasts" at greater length, with insistent suggestion of Mr. Hardy's baleful plight in the grip of such morbid conception. One is minded to deal out to him the service of the practical hostess in Henry V.: "Now I, to comfort him, bid him a' should not think of God." He would certainly be not only happier himself, and more philosophical, but far more grateful to his fellow men were he to ban the subject utterly from his brain and lips. This idea, however, is the paramount one in "The Dynasts." He takes the horrors of war, precipitated by that sublime *parvenu*, Napoleon, as an object-lesson of the insensate juggling of his malignant, prepotent "It."

As for the literary quality of this lengthy work, he composes his Brobdignagian mosaic with strenuous, artistic patience. The imagination is filled with the character of the scenes, and the action is vivid, realistic, and synthesized in an able manner. As poetry, it is grandiose to turgidity in its style, with scant appeal to the higher emotions. Napoleon's intention of utilizing marine forces for the subjugation of England plays a large part in this first instalment of "The Dynasts," and the battle of Trafalgar is graphically pictured. It concludes with the death of Pitt.

But the most interesting point for consideration is the Preface, for there Mr. Hardy gives the *raison d'être* of this portentous drama. Owing to his familiarity with the part of England most agitated by the prospect of "Bony's" descent upon Albion, a section in which George III. had a summer residence, and where Hardy, Nelson's flag-captain at Trafalgar, was born, he was led to write "The Trumpet-Major," in 1879. Hardy found then that he was "in the tantalizing position of having touched the fringe of a vast international tragedy, without being able, through limits of plan, knowledge, and opportunity, to enter farther into its events." Six years ago he outlined "The Dynasts," and has been at work on it, at odd intervals, ever since. He felt that continental writers had paid provokingly slight regard to English influence and action throughout that struggle.

As to his introduction of "certain impersonated abstractions, or intelligences, called spirits," after saying that "they are intended to be taken by the reader for what they may be worth as *contrivances of the fancy merely*," with the further remark that "their doctrines are but tentative, and are advanced with little eye to a systemized philosophy warranted to lift 'the burthen of the mystery' of this unintelligible world," he adds that "the chief thing hoped for them is that they and their utterances may have dramatic plausibility enough to procure for them, in the words of Coleridge, "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith."

This apologetic attitude toward the introduction of supernatural agencies does not chime in with the brazen forwardness with which Mr. Hardy exploits his monstrous conception of the primal all-doer. The spirits are introduced merely to bring out concisely and with shifty cunning the inherent atrocity of this supreme Caliban. Mr. Hardy says "the scheme of contrasted choruses and other conventions of this external feature was shaped with a single view to the modern expression of a modern outlook." In this same spirit of advanced modernity, which, happily, seems represented by Mr. Hardy alone, he speaks of his grewsome primal force as "It." He courteously accounts for this also: "The abandonment of the masculine pronoun in allusions to the first or fundamental energy seemed a necessary and logical consequence of the long abandonment by thinkers of the anthropomorphic conception of the same." The derogatory character of Mr. Hardy's appellative is slight aspersion on God composed to the horrible essence ascribed to Him. It is not too much to assert that the author is writing this drama for the sake of relieving his mind of the grisly phantom that weighs upon it so heavily. Were such an omnipotent monster personal and volent, mankind might have the grim pleasure of cursing him, as Mr. Hardy says he would do. But Mr. Hardy makes him an utterly irresponsible agent, who doesn't know what he is doing! It is a remarkable production, but an unwholesome one.

THE CALL,
San Francisco, Calif. 5
Date FEB 7 1904

Hardy More Rapt Wild in "Dynasts"

LAMENTOR, thunder-throated upon Wagnerian fold and contorting up the terrible spirits of the past, saw not such a tumultuous host of phantoms nor heard such a rustling of vampire wings as those which came in a vision to Thomas Hardy, the English man of letters. His study must have been surcharged with disembodied shades, astral archangels and grinning trolls when he set himself to the writing of "The Dynasts." The gibbering of bogies of unrighteousness, the whisper of mysterious sprites of the air, the sounding call of Azrael—what ordinary voices were there absent from that unholy chorus which dinned into the ears of the would-be dramatist a jumbled roar of unintelligible sounds and caused his pen to attempt vainly the transcription of this bedlam of thought promptings.

For it was a drama of the Napoleonic throes which Hardy was attempting; a drama in three parts, nineteen acts and thirty scenes. Shades of Chinese tragedy! The first part of this stupendous dramatic panorama we have with us now; as to the other two, Mr. Hardy naively states that they are "in hand" and their publication "is not guaranteed." This doling out of one consignment first shows that Mr. Hardy has at least the dramatic manager's instinct and that he is "trying it on a dog."

The author cannot be blamed for having an imagination. It is readily understood that the remarkable period of stress which was straining the nations of Europe just one hundred years ago produced effects which may well fire the imagination of a less worthy man than Hardy. The tremendous sweep of army after army, the crash of thrones and the rending of boundaries cannot but produce in the mind of any one of poetic sensibilities a mental picture of the dreadful tenor of those times. Such has been the effect upon Hardy. But he would give this impressive visualized epic out to a less imaginative world and therein he makes a mistake.

The task is too great for the pen of the author. He cannot be a Homer or a Milton. He has not the power to grasp the enormous thought in its entirety. The theme at the back of it all which holds together all of the multitudinous cantos and makes the one great unit may be in his mind but not in his work. The result is that the epic drama which he hoped to create is naught but a fearsome olla podrida of disjointed visions.

It is not manifest that Hardy endeavors to throw any new historical light upon the Napoleonic wars, though in his foreword he declares that England's part in that great struggle has been heretofore slighted by European writers. His insistent reiteration of the fact that all the actors in the great warfare were but puppets in the hands of "the Immanent Will" cannot be thought to be any addition to the historical record by those who believe that we are, all of us, in the hollow of God's hand. The Almighty was known to have shielded Israel from their enemies while Napoleon was still the soul of an Egyptian cat, may be.

From the viewpoint of style, Mr. Hardy's work may be said to be good rhetoric, but very poor verse. The blank verse, if chopped into separate sentences, would be found to be grammatically correct, but for blank verse it is hardly to be accepted as worthy of the name. There are many weary wastes of dialogue to be traversed and few water springs of true poesy rejoice the weary traveler. Inspiration seems to be lacking in the verse, even though it supplied the theme.

Mr. Hardy has made his name as fiction. He has written some little verses which are good. But it is sincerely to be hoped that he will not be encouraged into the completion of parts two and three [illegible]

N. Y. TIMES.
JAN 30 1904

THE DYNASTS.

THE first part of Thomas Hardy's long promised drama is now extant, written, of course, in choice English. It is entitled "The Dynasts: A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars" and bears on its title page, as a motto, this couplet from Tennyson's "Dream of Fair Women:"

And I heard sounds of insult, shame, and wrong,
And trumpets blown for wars.

The first part contains six of the projected nineteen acts, which are subdivided into twenty-nine scenes. The list of personages occupies four pages. Besides the "Phantom Intelligences" such as the Ancient Spirit of Years, the Spirit of Pity, the Spirit of Rumor and the Shade of the Earth, King George III., his Cabinet, Lord Nelson and his naval associates, the Lord Mayor of London, Bonaparte and his Marshals, Cardinals, Priests, Archdukes, Emperors, Princes, peasants, common soldiers, wayfarers, Queens, and Empresses, ladies of the nobility, town women, street women, ship women innumerably figure in the action.

Mr. Hardy explains that when his novel, "The Trumpet Major," was published, more than twenty years ago, he found himself in the tantalizing position of "having touched the fringe of a vast international tragedy, without being able, through limits of plan, knowledge, and opportunity, to enter further into its events; a restriction that prevailed for many years." He outlined the "play" about six years ago, inspired to it by "the provokingly slight regard paid to English influence and action throughout the struggle by those Continental writers who had dealt imaginatively with Napoleon's career." He claims for it "a tolerable fidelity to the facts of its date as they are given in ordinary records."

* * *

These statements are perfectly intelligible and, needless to say, the book is not devoid of interest quite out of the common. With the quality of the work as poetry we shall deal later. That will be a comparatively easy task. But who is to assign to such a work its place in literature? The difficulty is not so much that it is a drama intended (to employ the old phrase) for the closet and not for the theatre. That description is applied to many dramas that have never been acted yet which obviously might be shown in the theatre. Here is a drama that bears no relation whatever to the theatre or to dramatic form. It begins with a solemn confab of spirits in the "Overworld," to which succeeds a conversation of the Spirit of the Years with a Spirit Sinister on "a ridge in Wessex" in March, 1805. Presently a stage coach enters, with passengers outside, who talk, their voices sounding "thin and small." More spirits, the stage coach disappearing, and then the scene shifts to Paris, thence to the old House of Commons in London, where angels and other spirits converse, and then "enter the gallery of the house in the disguise of ordinary strangers" before Richard Brinsley Sheridan rises to introduce a bill. Pitt, Fox, and others debate in good blank verse, there is a division, and the scene shifts to the Harbor of Boulogne, where the pageantry of war is exhibited in dumb show; thence the action is transferred to the house of a lady of quality in London, and thence again to the Cathedral of Milan, where the first act ends with Napoleon's coronation.

* * *

In Act II. there are goings on in the dockyard at Gibraltar, off Ferrol on the French Admiral's flagship, at Boulogne, and again in Wessex. In the middle of Act III. we have reached the frontiers of Upper Austria and Bavaria, but in Act IV. we are back again in Wessex, assisting at a conference between King George and his Ministers. And so we skip about Europe until we have the field of Austerlitz in Act VI., with a change near the end of Part I. to [illegible] bedchamber in Bowling Green House, [illegible].

[illegible] be six acts in Part II. and [illegible] in Part III., and the formidable work will end in the Overworld some time after Waterloo. A note by the author informs us that "the second and third parts are in hand, but their publication is not guaranteed."

* * *

Before such a tremendous effort criticism must pause in some bewilderment. The critics of Mr. Hardy's own land do not quite know what to make of it. Here are a few expressions of opinion which have been printed there:

"The Dynasts" is a very notable production, and at this hour, when the nations which fought against Napoleon are, perhaps, more unrestful than at any period since the setting of "The Corsican's" star, there is much in the book to give us pause while we compare our position now under our present Government with our position then under Pitt.

This much, at all events, then, is clear—that Mr. Hardy's "The Dynasts" is unwieldy and topheavy. If the author chooses to make light of the question whether a so-called literary drama is drama at all—or, rather, a perverse and wrong-headed variety—we, for our part, cannot forget that a clear method of development, a gradual heightening of the dramatic issue until the catastrophe occurs, is the essence even of the literary drama.

Mr. Hardy is to be congratulated on resisting the temptation to use up his materials in an "historical novel" of the conventional type. His fine poetical drama will probably attract fewer readers; but it is far more worthy of his reputation, and of the lofty and splendid theme on which he has had the ambition to adventure.

After all, historical accuracy as to fact in such work matters very little in comparison with accuracy of atmosphere and the pervading and authentic breath of life. To put the matter briefly, we prefer both as literature and art the fringe of the subject as touched in "The Trumpet Major" to the texture of it as treated in "The Dynasts." In the one case we have a moving story wrought with infinite care and full of human modulations; in the other we have a drama greatly planned, but lacking in concentration and the intimacy of simple things.

* * *

For our own part, we have no opinion to express, as yet. It is a fact which, we fancy, will not be disputed, that the First Part of "The Dynasts" is easy to read, in spite of its forbidding form. We shall be content, for the present, to quote a few passages from the book, which is published in New York by the Macmillan Company.

N. Y. TIMES.
Date FEB 6 1904

MR. HARDY'S DRAMA.

It must be admitted, to begin with, that Thomas Hardy had an indisputable right to compose a drama, if he chose to do so, and, for that matter, to project it in 100 acts instead of the 19 of his scheme, and to divide the said acts into 1,000 scenes instead of the meagre 130 to which he has limited his muse.

It was also clearly Mr. Hardy's right to make a preface for his drama for the purpose of explaining that the work was intended for the closet, not the stage; for mental not theatrical performance. Thus, also, have other poets spoken of dramas they have written, and an incredulous world has sometimes smiled, while never doubting that the plays would not and, perhaps, could not be acted. There are some words in Mr. Hardy's preface, however, which suggest that he has a secret hope that some day his play may be acted.

Why does he hint, for example, at the debased state of the contemporary stage? Why is the possibility that "mental performance alone may eventually be the fate of all drama other than that of contemporary or frivolous life" a "question not without interest" in the introduction of a poem in dramatic form avowedly intended only to be read? Why should the suggestion of "a monotonic delivery of speeches, with dreamy conventional gestures" be made for the supernatural characters, together with a remark about the employment of "gauzes or screens to blur outlines" in such a preface? Why should the author carefully point out a certain likeness between this "drama" and the plays of Aeschylus, which were certainly acted?

But whatever the hope of the author may be, a perusal of the first part of "The Dynasts: A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars" (the Macmillan Company) must satisfy the sophisticated reader that no attempt will ever be made toward its theatrical performance. That is the only point, we fancy, upon which the mind of the sophisticated reader of this fragment will ever be thoroughly satisfied concerning it. It is such a bewildering conglomeration of the real and the ideal, of the pageantry of war and the commonplace of peasant life; of verse possessing appreciable poetic charm and verse that is no better or much worse than so much prose; of the chattering and moaning of joyless, impotent, and undignified spirits; of the needless talk of humans, of tragedy spoiled by bathos, of comedy that fails to amuse; of humor and irony almost worthy of Swift, of measured moralizing quite worthy of Tupper, that the most receptive mind can make very little out of it.

The poet insists, first, on the acceptance of the doctrine of predestination. The rise and fall of the Corsican were foreordained. Wherefore, the schemes of Pitt were useless. Yet the poet insists just as strongly (and, he says, has planned his formidable work for the sole purpose of insisting,) on the potency of England's influence in the Napoleonic wars from first to last. But what mattered England's influence, if all was prearranged in the overworld? Why insist upon it?

We published some account of the first part of this curious work last week. The second and third parts may or may not be forthcoming. The author has them "in hand," but does not pledge himself to give them to the world. Perhaps much depends on the acceptance of Part I. Wherefore, let us say again that it is readable. Admirers of Hardy's best works (this is surely not one of them) will find passages in it worthy of the poet. Yet they are not generally speeches of Napoleon or Pitt or George III., (the three personages most elaborately drawn in Part I.,) but rather the utterances of peasants and burghers.

One notes that the rhythm demands the pronunciation of Trafalgar with the accent on the last syllable, as Englishmen of to-day do not pronounce the word. One notes also Mr. Hardy's evident knowledge of the tricks of cable correspondents in the use of such words as "unknow," "inexist," "uncurse," which are known in newspaperdom as "cable words." "Artistry," "bombastry," and the like are used plentifully.

Hardy uses the word "panorama" in his preface to describe "The Dynasts." It does demand of the reader a sort of panoramic imagination. He must see things largely. He must supply many details. He must also be prodigiously interested in the English history of the opening of the nineteenth century and view all the momentous happenings on the Continent of Europe in that era from the British point of view.

Atlantic Monthly
May 1904

Meanwhile the "high window of dramatic verse" continues to be occupied, not always happily. Mr. Hardy's present volume, we note with concern, is only the first installment of a work of imposing proportions.[1] Several hundred speaking human characters are promised for the whole Drama, not to speak of an Ancient Spirit of the Years, a Spirit of the Pities, Spirits Sinister and Ironic, etc. Obviously this is not to be a drama of the practical sort. In his Preface the author goes so far as to speculate "whether mental performance alone may not eventually be the fate of all drama other than that of contemporary or frivolous life." He admits, however, that this work is rather a "panoramic show" than in any strict sense a drama. A panoramic show, one supposes somewhat vaguely, ought to possess lucidity, mobility, the color and the flow of life in the mass. The multitudinous scenes in the present effort are full of information, comment, and proper names; they are empty of persons and of poetry. They have logical continuity, but no creative unity whatever. They do not flow into one another; they are stuck up side by side, like photographs on a wall. They are, in short, the work of a master of realistic fiction in a field altogether alien to his powers. Mr. Hardy has never proved himself a poet in a small way; he here scores a failure in the colossal style. His verse is for the most part an achievement of elaborate mischance: —

> A verbiage marked by nothing more of weight
> Than ignorant irregularity,

as he makes Sheridan say in the course of a remarkable versified report of a parliamentary debate. The Spirits have a particularly crabbed and toplofty habit of speech. It is the Ancient Spirit of the Years (and not Ancient Pistol) who emits this extraordinary couplet: —

> So may ye judge Earth's jackaclocks to be
> Not fugled by one Will, but function-free.

Mr. Hardy has, one discovers after some exercise of patience, succeeded in throwing emphasis upon England's part in the Napoleonic struggle, and in expressing a healthy British scorn for Napoleon and other foreign persons.

[1] *The Dynasts: A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars*, in Three Parts, Nineteen Acts, and One Hundred and Thirty Scenes. Part First. By THOMAS HARDY. New York: The Macmillan Co. 1904.

Philadelphia Public Ledger

Date JAN 31 1904

A NEW BOOK BY THOMAS HARDY

"The Dynasts," an Ambitious Drama, with Phantoms for Its Chief Characters and with Principal Scenes in the Overworld—Human Life and History as Seen by Superior Intelligences.

THE DYNASTS: A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. In 3 parts, 19 acts and 130 scenes. By Thomas Hardy. 228 pages. New York: The Macmillan Company.

THE remarkable book which Mr. Thomas Hardy has given to the world in what is beginning to be his old age, after some years of literary inactivity, is a work which in many ways is a great surprise, and yet at the same time one which comes from him now most naturally. This curious drama; this oracular dissertation on the "Immanent Will and Its Designs" could have been written by no one else; it exhibits in one way or another all of the qualities which marked the earlier work of Mr. Hardy, yet he probably could not have written it at an earlier period of his life.

Absolutely characteristic of the author in its views of the problems of life, it is in concept, in form and in atmosphere totally different from anything the historian of Wessex has ever before attempted. In the novels which have made his name famous and his methods the admiration of those who have been able to study them, Mr. Hardy has concerned himself with the affairs of the simple: the daily life, the homely love affairs, the tavern comedies and household tragedies of shepherds, woodmen, furze cutters, peddlers and Wessex farmers, have supplied him objects from the study of which he has been able to make perhaps the most impressive picture of human life which fiction affords. He has been a writer of provincial tales, yet his appeal has been universal. Busy with the slight and vulgar affairs of yokels, he has nevertheless been telling the immemorial human story with all its ancient and everlasting problems, but with particular reference to the paradox of fate and individual freedom.

A distinguishing feature of Mr. Hardy's work has been his aloofness. He is always the cool, dispassionate recorder, refusing to sympathize with any of his people; to excuse, to explain or to defend them. He has had no heroes; no writer since Shakespeare has regarded his characters with such pitiless impartiality. With a detachment almost Olympian, in all his Wessex novels Hardy has watched his people struggling in the web of their own actions. Not on the stage of Greece was the tread of the avenger more inexorable. All was drawn on the broad lines of ancient tragedy.

A peculiarity of Mr. Hardy's previous work has been the adaptation and use of the Chorus. Save in an occasional grim epigram, Mr. Hardy has not allowed himself to comment upon the doings of his people, but in each one of the Wessex tales a group of clowns, meeting in the village choir loft or at the tavern, exchange keen, if simple views on the doings of the main characters of the story.

The New Book Deals with the Old Problems in New Fashion.

In "The Dynasts," of which we now have the first of three Parts, Mr. Hardy is still dealing with the old problem of destiny and freedom, but he has abandoned his favorite moors for the world itself, with its battlefields and its royal courts, its cities and wide acres of land, and he has turned from Diggory Venn, Christian Cantle, Gabriel Oak, Joseph Poorgrass, Winterbourne and Martha South to Napoleon, the Empress Josephine and the Emperor Francis Joseph, Murat, Ney, King George III, Nelson, Pitt and Fox, and the great ones of the earth. And in the new work the Chorus is erected into the book itself, and the comment is no longer made by clowns, but by an imposing array of "Phantom Intelligences"—The Ancient Spirit of the Years, The Spirit of the Pities, The Spirit Sinister, The Spirit Ironic, The Chorus of the Years, of the Pities, of Spirits Sinister and Ironic, the Shade of the Earth, Messengers, and Recording Angels.

All this sounds rather terrifying. The book is indeed a daring work, and its unusual character will doubtless prevent wide recognition of its greatness. Yet it is perfectely intelligible; its plan, in the light of familiarity with the author's former work, is wonderfully beautiful.

"The Dynasts," then, shows the work world under the survey of superior Intelligences. The moment taken for this survey is the early part of the nineteenth century, the period of the Napoleonic wars.

"The Dynasts" is a record and a view of human events as inevitably determined by a power other than the volition of the actors. Human freedom is displayed as a delusion. Not merely the course of individual lives, but the wide range of history is already fashioned by a power beyond. This power the author refers to as the Immanent Will. [illegible]

The Puppets Seen as Palpitating Parts of the World-Brain.

But this is not all; the teaching of the drama goes much further—comes to this: The actors in the play of life are not really puppets of a Power beyond them; rather they are parts of it—

> * * * limbs of Itself;
> Each one a jot of It in quaint disguise.

Men are the helpless agents of a Will not their own. Yet this Will is not to be thought of as something different from them; transcendent above the world. Men are a part of It; It is the world itself. Events are the thoughts — the aimless, weary, desultory thoughts — of a world-consciousness that has somehow blundered into wakefulness. It does not so much ordain events and direct the destinies of men as subsist in them. It is a Will immanent in the world and all that goes on therein. History is just this: the exhibition — a vain one — of the Immanent Will, "Whose outcome we all are."

Again, as the spectators regard the actors in the coronation ceremony at Milan, the scene is described as assuming a preternatural transparency, and there is beheld, as it were, the interior of a brain, palpitant with a sublime Will—and the tissue of the brain is formed of the personages of the action—

> A Brain Whose whole connotes the Everywhere,
> And Whose procedure may but be discerned
> By phantom eyes like ours; the while unguessed
> Of those it stirs, who (even as ye do) dream
> Their motions free, their orderings supreme;
> Each life apart from each, with power to mete
> Its own day's measures; balanced, self-complete;
> Though they subsist but atoms of the One
> Laboring through all, divisible from none.

The New Pantheism is a View of Life Bitterly Sad.

This is the doctrine of "the anatomy of the Immanent Will" as set forth in Thomas Hardy's latest book. It is a conception which conforms altogether to a strong modern tendency of thought, hateful as it must be to all people of faith. Mr. Hardy preaches a desperate pantheism. No previous work of his has so daringly proclaimed the pathetic futility of man's effort. Heretofore he has been grim, but never bitter. There was not lacking in "The Return of the Native," "Desperate Remedies," "Far from the Madding Crowd" and the rest a certain cheerful and reconciling philosophy. Here is no comfort. A Spirit and a Chorus of the Pities is allowed occasional voice in the new book, but their pleas and arguments are weak. The fatal scheme of things is nowhere maybe denounced as evil. Yet, of course, it is utterly dispiriting; the utmost that can be said is this:

SHADE OF THE EARTH.

> What boots it, Sire,
> To down this dynasty, set that one up,
> Goad panting peoples to the throes thereof,
> Make wither here my fruit, maintain it there,
> And hold me travailing through fineless years
> In vain and objectless monotony,
> When all such tedious conjuring could be shunned
> By uncreation? Howsoever wise
> The governance of these massed mortalities
> A juster wisdom his who should have ruled
> They had not been.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS.

> Nay, something hidden urged
> The giving matter motion; and these coils
> Are, maybe, good as any.

There is a fatalism that deems itself religious. There is a pantheism that has appealed to great religious teachers—even to Christian ones — as splendidly joyful. Hardy's is hideously dark.

It will be interesting for students of philosophy to relate it to recognized systems of pessimism — to the thought of Schopenhauer and Von Hartmann, to the historic schemes of religious fatalism. None of these entertain creeds more desperately gloomy or more destructive of individual effort. Omar the tent-maker penned no lines more dismally portraying the vanity of man's deeds and desires.

The New Hardy Book is an Ambitious and Lofty Literary Effort.

"The Dynasts" demands consideration as a most ambitious literary attempt. Apart from its philosophy, however, "The Dynasts" is a work which demands consideration as an attempt—one of the most ambitious ever made in literature—to summon the world before the eye of imagination and reflection. No other man of this generation could have made it with likelier prospects of success. Those who recall certain singular moments of elevation in his earlier writings, notably in "Two on a Tower" and in the never-to-be-forgotten scene with which "The Return of the Native" opens, and who understand how constantly the action of all Mr. Hardy's novels revolves in the presence of the loftiest conception — though it is never paraded—of the earth as the stage of a drama of infinite interest, will not be surprised at this grandly conceived ambition to look [illegible] of the [illegible] world.

Verdicts upon the success of the attempt will vary widely. It may be questionable, for instance, how far Mr. Hardy has succeeded in giving reality to such scenes as the debate in Commons, the battle of Trafalgar, the councils of Napoleon, the field of Austerlitz. They are hardly Shakespearean. But not even that otherwise unmatched dramatist has excelled the dialogue of the simple folk on Egdon Heath, a spot on which Hardy is always triumphant. And there are other scenes, such as that at Bath, when Pitt receives the news of Austerlitz, which may rightly take their place among great historic representations.

Neither can there be any denying that the large effect is vividly impressive of the pulsing life of men on this tumultuous ball we tread. Whatever philosophy is taught concerning this life, at all events, we are lifted above and shown it in its palpitant, its infinite interest. "The Dynasts" promises to be a great book. Its first part, now given to the public, invites to the loftiest regions which thought may enter.

Phil^a. Press. U. S. A.
Feb 21. 1904

THOMAS HARDY'S DRAMA

THOMAS HARDY'S adoption of the dramatic form for his new book, "The Dynasts" (Macmillan Company, New York), is a source of sincere and widespread regret. A master of narrative has chosen to hamper himself with restrictions wholly alien to his genius. Apparently the second part of Goethe's "Faust" is his model for this treatment of the Napoleonic period, with its personifications of elements and abstractions. Literary courage is needed to undertake a drama in three parts, nineteen acts and 130 scenes. Only the first part of this astonishing performance is published. He is ambitious to present in this drama a vast panorama of the Napoleonic wars. Except for the descriptions of scenes and stage directions and some dialogue that falls to his Wessex rustics, he discards that fluent prose of his novels and gives blank verse that is never distinguished and is never as poetic as his best prose.

The whole project of "The Dynasts" is a blunder. Mr. Hardy might well be ambitious to become the imaginative interpreter of England's great part in combatting and crushing the Corsican conqueror. He touched the fringe of the subject in "The Trumpet Major," and he has made himself master of the whole history of the period by assiduous study since then. But he is ill-advised in relinquishing his own magnificent medium of expression, the novel. He pretends to believe that the drama is a more convenient and better form, that it is equally readable and has more lasting qualities than the novel. This is pure fallacy. The drama is by no means so satisfactory as the novel in the hands of such a master of imaginative prose narrative as Mr. Hardy; it is not so inviting to read, and it is not destined to a longer life. Mr. Hardy's pique over the criticisms of "Jude, the Obscure" and his announced intention of writing no more novels is well remembered.

Mr. Hardy makes an ambitious attempt, but he chooses a medium of which he is not the master, as if the long distance swimmer were to try his prowess in mountain climbing. Another mistake of Mr. Hardy is in running counter to the cherished beliefs of the Christian world, or as he expresses it, in repudiating "all the mythologies, including that of 'Paradise Lost.'" He explains further "that the abandonment of the masculine pronoun, in allusions to the First or Fundamental Energy, seemed a necessary and logical consequence of the long abandonment by thinking of the anthropomorphic conception of the same." The play is dreamy and shadowy. If Nelson's death does not move the reader neither does that of Pitt, dying of an "incurable disease" whose "name is Austerlitz," while the Pities chant a mournful requiem. The reason is that all is too vague.

(This is the real offence)

Sun (Baltimore)
4 Aug. 1904

This is a very strange production. It is but the beginning of a vast trilogy, beside which anything less than a Chinese tragedy pales into insignificance. The author actually states upon his title page that it is a drama "in three parts, 19 acts and 130 scenes!" The reader feels that the task is too great, and yet there appears to be a reason for the play, if we can call it such. It is an attempt by an Englishman to present in dramatic form, or a series of dramas, the great events associated with the career of the Emperor Napoleon, looked at from the point of view of an Englishman. He feels that in the plays that have been produced upon the Continent in connection with the same general subject that the part of England has not been sufficiently appreciated. He proposes to set the world right on this score. But the author makes a fatal mistake. A play that can be put upon the boards is a mighty power for impressing the world with an idea. A thousand or more see it at the same time. They are thrilled with the beauty and force of the production. The next night another thousand see it and they, too, are moved by the play as no one is by a mere narrative, however well-written. And so it goes on, and the play has soon touched more people and touched them more effectively than a book ever could. But the book before us is wholly incapable of being presented upon the stage. The author does not regard it as a play to be acted: Rather it is to be read in the closet. It is to be enjoyed in that cold and abstract way. We have here a curious survival of the old superstition that was held in England 100 years ago—that the best play could not be played, but should be read in the study. Perhaps the reason for this return to an exploded notion—at least we thought it exploded—is that there is a vast amount of trash in the English language that poses as drama and is unworthy of the stage upon which it appears. Under such circumstances the closet play is perhaps the better piece of literature. But in other languages the test of a play is in part the adaptability of the play to the exigencies of production upon the stage. In the present case the author has taken the liberty that his conception of the play allows him and has introduced a great machinery of spiritual powers, abstractions that appear from time to time in the course of the play, impossible changes of scene and dumb shows so complicated that no stage carpenter would venture to place them upon the stage in such rapid succession. It is here merely the use of the dramatic form without those real limitations that ordinarily makes the task of the dramatist all the greater and his triumph more satisfactory. We believe that Mr. Hardy is on the wrong path. His work reads well enough, but he has failed in making a drama that has any right to be considered a drama.

JOSEPH CULLEN AYER, JR.
Cambridge, Mass.

The Dynasts. Part Second

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"Times" Literary Supplement

Feb 16 1906

LITERATURE.

"THE DYNASTS."

THE DYNASTS: A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars in three parts. By THOMAS HARDY. Part Second. (Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.)

In what degree is Mr. Hardy a poet? The greater part of *The Dynasts* is written in blank verse of so curious and so personal a quality that to attempt to define its exact value as poetry would be worth doing in the case of an absolutely unknown writer; it is doubly worth doing in the case of so fine, so accomplished a *prosateur* as Mr. Thomas Hardy. Since the days of "The Excursion" English blank verse divides itself roughly into two classes—there is the mechanical, pedestrian type of verse, which is technically poetry because it is not prose, which is chiefly used for translations and theatrical and other commercial purposes, and which is entirely negligible; and there is that other type which is essentially the expression and result of a living sympathy for literature and the literary form—the careful, the polished, the elaborate work of the skilled or inspired craftsman. But Mr. Hardy's blank verse refuses to range itself in either category. Mr. Hardy, indeed, is singularly devoid of the peeping graces and adornments we are accustomed to look for in a poet. Compare the blank verse of *The Dynasts* even with the musical and practised blank verse of Mr. Stephen Phillips, verse rich with a thousand associations; and it is indeed difficult at first to understand why a man of immense talent like Mr. Hardy should have chosen this particular medium of rhythm for what is perhaps his greatest book. No one was ever, apparently, more insensible to the natural magic, the delight of purely poetic language. No one has ever appeared less disposed to "look upon fine phrases like a lover." Mr. Hardy tells us, indeed, how

> All give way
> And regiments crash like trees at felling time.

He writes, with curiously Elizabethan imagery,

> God grant his star less lurid rays than ours,
> Or this too pregnant, hoarsely groaning day
> Shall, ere its loud delivery be done,
> Have twinned disasters to the fatherland
> That fifty years will fail to sepulchre.

And again of Napoleon he muses—

> Upon what dark star he may land himself
> In his career through space.

But even such roughly-eloquent lines are isolated examples. To find a poetic parallel to Mr. Hardy's wilful and determined plainness of language we should have to go back to Crabbe; or, better still, to Wordsworth's "noble plainness." Yet here, again, Mr. Hardy refuses to be classified. For Crabbe had never an instance of that lofty imagination, that power of visualizing the "far Unapparent" which is so characteristic of Mr. Hardy. And Mr. Hardy's verse never for one moment rises to those clear heights of perfect form where Wordsworth often moves at ease.

Still—and this is surely one of those surprises, those apparent contradictions between cause and effect, which only belong to the greatest writers—it would be difficult to over-estimate the interest, the high quality of dramatic sincerity, the genius and the Vision, which animate Mr. Hardy's unmelodious and awkward verses. Of the noblest poetry Mr. Hardy surely has all "the matter and the substance," even if we must constrain ourselves to deny him the "manner and the style." It is undeniable that for supreme success in poetry more is required of a man than the powerful application of ideas to life. As Matthew Arnold says—"it must be an application under the conditions fixed by poetic truth and poetic beauty." And (we are now speaking only of his verse) judged by the highest standards, Mr. Hardy has almost no sense of this poetic beauty. Yet so profound, so stirring, is the effect upon us of his high imaginative qualities that we cannot easily bring ourselves to refuse him altogether the name and rank of poet. Kant tells us somewhere that "in Morals there is no Imitation." This is true of all art; truest of all perhaps of the art of Poetry. And there is something about Mr. Hardy's semi-avoidance of all literary adornment—his inherent, ingrained, unsullied originality in the conception and treatment of his subject—which could almost tempt us to believe that he has discovered a new method and invented a new formula. He would seem to have adopted the *form* of verse—its outward semblance even without its music—for the sake of its tradition; and to speak in rhythmic English as a Greek actor from behind his mask, with all the authority and weight of association added to the purport of the actual speech.

Considering the scope of this epic, its vast extent in time and place and in the number and importance of the characters involved—considering the necessarily brief glimpses, the intense and concentrated revelations of personality and situation which is all that can be given us regarding each man and woman in turn—it is really doubtful if any less conventional literary form would have been as effective. All the associations of blank verse, even its artificiality, were necessary, to drive home that impersonal abstract quality in the action of the drama which makes Mr. Hardy's last book so remarkable. As in all fine work the result attained is both individual and cumulative. *The Dynasts* is daringly and superbly original; but every noble piece of literature we have read helps and invites us to understand *The Dynasts*. As Mr. Hardy points out himself in his preface to Part First:—

> The subject is familiar to all; and foreknowledge is assumed to fill in the curves required to combine the whole gaunt framework into an artistic unity. The spectator in thought becomes a performer whenever called upon. . . . Should he refuse to do this, an historical presentment on an intermittent plan, in which the *dramatis personæ* number some hundreds, exclusive of crowds and armies, becomes in his individual case unsuitable.

This much was self-evident; but it was only the instinct of the artist which could determine so unerringly the precise form in which these intermittent revelations could be most forcibly made. Nothing could be more instructive, more illuminating to any student of literature than to observe how these alternations of verse and prose—of blank verse for the action and of noble and flexible prose for the purely imaginative stage directions—add at once to the vitality and lofty impression of the drama. Truly the Wisdom of Art is justified of her children.

And, curiously enough, it is in these very stage directions, these episodes for Dumb Show, that Mr. Hardy touches the highest levels of the poetic vision. It is almost impossible to choose among them. At one moment he is showing us the driving in state of the future Empress on her way to meet Napoleon, "that procession of enormous length," with its six-horse carriages and its eight-horse coach, which

> Contains a rosy, blue-eyed girl of eighteen, with full, red lips, round figure, and pale auburn hair. She is Maria Louisa, and her eyes are red from recent weeping. . . . And the other ladies of the Palace behind have a pale, proud, yet resigned, look as if conscious that upon their sex had been laid the burden of paying for the peace with France. . . . The observer's vision being still bent on the train of vehicles and cavalry, *the point of sight is withdrawn high into the air* till the huge procession on the brown road looks no more than a file of ants crawling along a strip of garden matting. . . . The puny concatenation of specks being exclusively watched, the surface of the earth seems to move along in an opposite direction, and in infinite variety of hill, dale, woodland, and champaign. Bridges are crossed, ascents are climbed, plains are galloped over, and towns are reached, among them Saint Polten, when night falls. Morning shines, and the royal crawl is resumed. . . .

And by this time we, too, are under the spell of this accumulation of quiet, plain, convincing visions. For us, too, *the point of sight is withdrawn high into the air*. We look down on the "animated dots pausing for formalities," this being the frontier. We see the long days of rain "spread their gauzes" over the world and the roofs and houses of Munich that look (from our height) "like the tesseræ of an irregular mosaic. A long stop is made here.

> The tedious advance continues. Vine-circled Stuttgart, flat Carlsruhe, the winding Rhine, storky Strassburg pass in panorama beneath us . . . the scenes begin to assume a French character. . . . The last day of the journey had dawned.

Nothing is more astonishing in *The Dynasts* than the subtle, the convincing way in which Mr. Hardy contrives to make the duration of time, the slow, inevitable movement of time, palpable to our imaginations; or how he detaches us from all actual contact with the drama we are watching, giving us actually the mental sensation of rising above, and brooding as from a great height over the infinitely remote issues of a living and convulsed world. Nothing is more persistently present to Mr. Hardy's imagination than the fierce or the pathetic clinging to life of creatures who cannot govern life. He shows us "four groups of moth-like transport boats discerned silently skimming a wide liquid plain." Other boats follow, from Cape Mondego, from Plymouth Sound, from down the Channel; and to us, gazing on them as we are asked to do "from high aloft, in July weather, and facing east," till we can see the English Channel receding endwise "as a tapering avenue near the centre," the actual movements of navies, the actual marches and battles of historic armies, acquire something of the abstract quality and the dignity of material which has undergone a transformation and been resolved into Art. This high dignity of treatment, this detached attitude of the mind, is everywhere visible in Mr. Hardy's drama. His peasants on Egdon-heath, his prime ministers and kings in Council, his emperors and his common soldiers, Nelson, and the deserters and camp followers in Spain, defile before him with the same sense of the infinite importance of each life to each—the same perception of the infinite helplessness of man in the presence of the great "purblind Doomsters." It is precisely this attitude of strict equity towards such different lives, this patient, unprejudiced contemplation of the isolated and yet strangely fatally interwoven destinies of men, which gives *The Dynasts* its high epic character. The second volume has not the advantage of a poignant central situation, a natural nodus, like the death of Nelson in volume one. But that admirable, that astonishing episode of the Deserters before Astorga, the episode of the madness of King George at Windsor, and the Hogarthian episode of the birth of the King of Rome, are each achievements of much beauty and interest.

We have questioned Mr. Hardy's standing as a writer of verse; there can be no possible question of the importance and high literary excellence of his latest book. The Dynasts is a work of exceptional power. It is a thing steeped with imagination. It is a great, modern, Epic of the Intelligence—a vision of the world charged with moving significance, amazing originality of conception. In this drama of the Napoleonic wars Mr. Hardy has followed the same system as he more tentatively followed in many of his novels; the same system that Victor Hugo followed in his novels. He has seen and felt and expressed in dramatic form the great impersonal Forces that rule the Universe. As Victor Hugo personified the Sea in the *Travailleurs de la Mer*, as Mr. Hardy himself has already personified the Heath and the Forest, and set his human puppets before us in such true relations to the blind Indifferences of nature that our hearts have been wrung with pity and stilled into acquiescence by the solemn presence of the Inevitable—so, in this latest work he deals once more with greater issues and more historical events. His art is not changed; it is only deepened and widened. Instead of Wessex he unrolls before our eyes the map of Europe. Instead of a little isolated group of peasants he shows us the men who made history. He evokes them for our contemplation, not by the methods of the historian but by the magic methods of the poet. And in attempting to estimate a book like *The Dynasts* what can be said beyond what was said so admirably, so finally, long ago, when Aristotle wrote that the superiority of Poetry over History consists in its possessing a higher truth, a higher seriousness?

Daily News
Feb 9. 1906.

A BOOK OF THE DAY.

MR. HARDY'S NAPOLEONIC DRAMA

(Published To-day.)

"The Dynasts: a Drama of the Napoleonic Wars." Part 2. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 6s.

(By A. G. Gardiner.)

In the introduction to the first volume of his stupendous drama, Mr. Hardy left it to the judgment of the public whether the remaining volumes should appear. The publication of the second volume shows that the judgment has been favourable. It could hardly be otherwise. Whatever may be the final verdict on this attempt to tell the history of Napoleonic Europe, as it were, by flashlight, to gather up all the thousand strands of interest into one vast, dramatic whole, to set the tramp of armies, the babble of courts and parliaments, the intrigues of Kings and lovers, to the aerial music of the spiritual world, there can be no doubt as to its compelling interest, its wonderful marshalling of fact, its sense of a whole universe involved in the drama that centres in the Man of Destiny. There are many points of view from which we may approach this work. We may regard it as history, or poetry, or philosophy, or drama. But all the factors are fused in one breathless movement. It is like a gigantic diorama before which the spectator sits entranced while the map of Europe is unrolled before him on an illimitable stage. He sees the stragglers from Jena galloping into Berlin with the news of the day that is lost, he feels the thrill of agony that pulses through the great city, and looks out with the citizens' eyes upon the Little Corporal come to claim the fruits of conquest; he sees on Fox in his Cabinet as he receives and passionately dismisses the man who offers to assassinate the universal enemy; he is with Moore at Corunna, with Wellesley at Talavera; from the Emperor of Austria's look-out he witnesses the fortunes of the day on the plateau of Wagram; he hears Josephine pleading for her place beside the master of Europe; sees the coarse revels of the Prince Regent at Carlton House, and King George's living death. And over all, like the comment of a Greek chorus, sound the voices of the unseen, the voices of pity and scorn, sad voices, sinister voices, uttering with a sort of aerial aloofness the reflections of eternity upon the crowded, tumultuous, bloody drama of time.

The first volume closed with Austerlitz and the death of Pitt. The present opens with Fox at the Foreign Office—"a stout, swarthy man, with shaggy eyebrows, and his breathing is somewhat obstructed. His clothes look as though they had been slept in." It closes with Albuera. Fox's day was short, and the Spirit of the Pities utters this comment on his passing:

Here, then, ends
My hope for Europe's reason-wrought repose!
He was the friend of peace—did his great best
To shed her balms upon humanity;
And now he's gone! No substitute remains.

Jena paves the way for Napoleon's Berlin decrees directed against British commerce, and for the meeting at Tilsit with the Tsar of Russia, whose loyalty to Prussia is easily overcome by the magnificent prospect of being taken into a world-partnership with Napoleon. The scene between Napoleon and the Queen of Prussia shows the conqueror in the mingled rôle of gallant and diplomat, with the diplomat triumphant. A flashlight on Spain illuminates the Court of King Carlos and the squalid intrigue between the Queen and Godoy, the "Prince of Peace," at the moment of Napoleon's inclusion of the Peninsula in his illimitable schemes. Then follows at St. Cloud a scene between Napoleon and Josephine on the subject that hovers like a black cloud over the life of the Empress. Napoleon declaims on the need of a royal line, and with sundry pinches of the arm urges his wife to make the sacrifice. Much of the dialogue is singularly plain spoken, for Mr. Hardy can never resist the interest of sex. Josephine urges delay, urges love, finally appeals to history and the childless great:

[illegible] why this craze for lineal manikins
[illegible]made of mere graveyard flesh? You have said
yourself
[illegible] mattered not. Great Cæsar, you declared,
[illegible] soulless to his rest; was greater deemed
[illegible] for the isolation. Frederick
[illegible], too, no heir. It is the fate of such,
[illegible], to be denied the common hope
[illegible] for fulness in the rarer gifts
[illegible] Nature yields them. O my husband long,
[illegible] not purge your soul to value best
[illegible] heredity from brain to brain
[illegible] supersedes mere sequences of blood,
[illegible] vary more from sire to son
[illegible] furthest strangers!
[illegible] offspring in his like must lie;
[illegible] of his line he be who shows
[illegible] in later bodiment,
[illegible] succeeding as he may!

The battle of Wagram is told with remarkable fulness and detail in dialogue as it proceeds. It adds Austria to the subjects of the triumphant Emperor. But meanwhile in Spain Wellesley is winning Talavera, the narrative of which passes in "dumb show" supplemented by the voices of the air. Here is the Chorus of Pities at the close of the first day's fighting:

Thus the dim nocturnal voice of the conflict
Closes with the receding roar of the gun-fire.
Harness loosened then, and their day-long strenuous
Strain unbending,

Worn out lines lie down where they late stood staunchly—
Cloaks around them rolled—by the bivouac embers:
There to pursue at dawn the dynasts' death-game
Unto the ending!

We pass from the Tuileries where Josephine hears her sentence of divorce and from the meeting and marriage of Napoleon with the Austrian Emperor's daughter to London and the squalid company of the Prince Regent, whom Mr. Hardy does not spare, and whom we see at one of his routs with a new mistress, his lawful wife and Mrs. Fitzherbert looking on from behind a pillar in the gallery. And so to Albuera and the close. There is a very beautiful semi-chorus of the Pities in the description of Albuera, which may be taken as an example of the many fine poems strewn throughout the drama:

Semichorus I. of the Pities (aerial music).
They come, beset by riddling hail;
They sway like sedges in a gale;
They fail, and win, and win, and fail. Albuera!

Semichorus II.
They gain the ground there, yard by yard,
Their brows and hair and lashes charred,
Their blackened teeth set firm and hard.

Semichorus I.
Their mad assailants rave and reel,
And face, as men who scorn to feel,
The close-lined, three-edged prongs of steel.

Semichorus II.
Till faintness follows closing-in;
When, faltering headlong down, they spin
Like leaves. But those pay well who win Albuera.

Semichorus I.
Out of six thousand souls that sware
To hold the mount, or pass elsewhere,
But eighteen hundred muster there.

Semichorus II.
Pale Colonels, Captains, rankmen lie,
Facing the earth or facing sky;—
They strove to live, they stretch to die.

Semichorus I.
Friends, foemen, mingle; heap and heap.—
Hide their hacked bones, Earth!—deep, deep, deep,
Where harmless worms caress and creep.

Chorus.
Hide their hacked bones, Earth!—deep, deep, deep,
Where harmless worms caress and creep.—
What man can grieve? what woman weep?
Better than waking is to sleep! Albuera!

Mr. Hardy's blank verse is not always faultless technically; but it is strong and virile, the instrument of one who bends it to his will rather than of one who uses it as his native medium.

It is obvious that in a drama, controlled by the history of a continent and involving hundreds of personalities that flit across the stage and then are seen no more, there can be no development of plot in the ordinary sense of the term. Yet as one reads on one feels a unity of design developing out of the tumult through which the great Corsican moves to his zenith and thence to his doom. And in addition to this the parts are held together by that use of the super-terrestrial presences who may, in a sense, be regarded as the real persons of the drama. For vast as is the stage that Napoleon dominates, immense as are the forces engaged, we are made to feel that this is a battle not of giants, but of pigmies and that, looking with the universal eye down on this European theatre where

great armies glitter in the sun,
And great Kings rule and men are boasted free

and where to the casual glance it seems that this man or that control the destinies, we are in reality witnessing the scurrying to and fro of puppets moved by inscrutable Will towards an unseen goal.

The whole drama is saturated with Mr. Hardy's philosophy of despair. Even the presences of the upper air breathe no message of hope, offer no solution of this riddle of pitiful life and infinite carnage. Yet one thinks the Spirit of Prophecy might have been introduced to throw a forward glance to the beginning of the next century, when the dream of the brotherhood of men and the peaceful union of nations should have passed into such practical shape as that which fills the world with hope to-day.

Necessarily there is little room for the development of character where the characters are so many and so transient, but the figure of Napoleon emerges sharp and clear, ruthless, egotistic, brutally frank, with a touch of sardonic humour and more than a touch of fatalism, a little melodramatic, but substantially sincere.

Pall Mall Gazette.
8 Feb 1906

THE NAPOLEONIC DRAMA.*

Those who blame Mr. Hardy for turning from prose to verse do him, we think, a grave injustice. For in an age when many string rhymes together and a few write poetry he has one great qualification. He has a zest for writing poetry; here you feel is the passion of saying things thus and not otherwise; and that passion is half the battle. In the second part of this enormous drama we are taken from the time of the Ministry-of-All-the Talents to the battle of Albuera; and in that space we meet with many and various characters, human and spiritual. The volume has all the sense of doom, of tremendous and impending destiny, that animated the other. We can say that we agree with Mr. Hardy's idea of presenting the conflicts of men, in all their pettiness, by contrast with the comments of the phantom intelligences who mask the Supreme Will. So far as it is a purely artistic idea, it succeeds in its purpose; but its philosophy is another thing, that seems to us to be as wrong-headed as it is hopeless. Nor do we quite grasp what real room there is in the eternal scheme for the Spirit of Pities. As a work of art, Mr. Hardy's book is even now (though not yet completed) incomparable save with one other work, also dealing with the Napoleonic drama; and that is Tolstoy's "War and Peace." It would be fascinating to draw out a parallel between these two gigantic canvases; how Tolstoy shows the littleness of the Napoleonic ambitions by setting them against the Eternal in man's heart, the Real as it exhibits itself among princes and people; and how Mr. Hardy seeks to draw the same lesson from putting Napoleon and his schemes against the great background of Universal and Unalterable Will. Tolstoy, in fact, breaks the Napoleonic idea by showing that all men have souls, and that no man, ultimately, has more than soul; while Mr. Hardy would shatter the illusion of the Emperor by showing that all men, from the Little Corporal to his camp followers, are but puppets in the dream of an Inflexible Fate. It is not a case where any critic can profess impartiality, and we think Tolstoy's is far the nobler conception; but in the stoical resignation of Mr. Hardy's creed there is a grim magnificence that attracts while it appals.

The artistry of this volume is fully equal to that of the first. That the blank verse flags at times is only natural; but some of the lyrics and interspersed choruses of the spirits attain a naked power and supremacy not excelled in Mr. Hardy's previous verse-writing. We have nothing but the highest praise, too, for the prose dialogues of the common soldiers and the populace: Mr. Hardy has been always frank; and in this book he insists on the right of the old masters to make the people talk and think as they really do: his Bristol soldiers, shipped across to Spain, have nothing of the glamour of the slum novel. The wonderful scene near Astorga, between several deserters, is a kind of infernal pendant to Burns's "Jolly Beggars." His Napoleon is naturally passionate and human; and the scenes between him and Josephine, and again between him and Marie Louise, the second wife, are astonishingly felicitous, while near the end of the book there is a scene with poor mad George III. that has the pathos of Thackeray's sketch. Of the minor English characters, Fox and "Prinny" stick in the mind.

* "The Dynasts," Part II. By T. Hardy. 4s. 6d. net. (London: Macmillan and Co.)

Spectator
April 7. 1906

MR. HARDY'S "DYNASTS."

The Dynasts: a Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. By Thomas Hardy. In Three Parts. Part the Second. (Macmillan and Co. 4s. 6d. net.)—The second part of Mr. Hardy's drama shows much the same merits and weaknesses as we noted two years ago in our review of Part I. It opens with Jena and ends on the eve of the Moscow Campaign. In a multitude of scenes and with a host of characters all the main events of those years are displayed, while spirits, ironic, sinister, and piteous, play the part of a Greek chorus, make appropriate comments, and fill up the gaps in the narrative. The blank verse tends to be spasmodic and unrhythmical, and the lyrics suffer from a deplorable lack of music. The diction is strained, and when metaphysics begin we flounder among quasi-technical platitudes. But in spite of a hundred faults, there is a curious sublimity about the very immensity of the scheme. Mr. Hardy has succeeded in showing us Europe like a map on a child's slate, and the great protagonists as puppets in the grip of destiny. The time is not yet to attempt a review of the whole work, but we can at least acknowledge the magnitude of the conception. In special scenes, too, he attains to a high degree of dramatic power. The picture of the deserters from Moore's army in the ruined cellar is a wonderful piece of realism, and these English soldiers talk the vigorous peasant language of which Mr. Hardy has long been the chief living master. Fine, too, is the scene of Moore's burial, and the picture of George III. in his madness lamenting his daughter's death. The lyrics are generally harsh and overcharged, but we must make two exceptions. The chorus of the Pities after Eylau contains many stately lines, and the lament of the dying troopers at Walcheren is in every respect a noble poem.

THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE.
FEBRUARY 17, 1906.

MR. HARDY'S "DYNASTS."*

Sooner or later all writers of romantic literature are possessed with the idea of making poem, play, or novel out of the "man of destiny." The inadequacy of mere narrative to express the upheaval of the nations of which he was the symbol, and the ideas and passions which surged about his personality, impresses itself upon the least imaginative. They pass into music with Tchaikowsky, into fiction with Tolstoy, into an ode Pindaric in its energy and obscurity with Meredith, and now into a new form, half drama and half descriptive, with Mr. Thomas Hardy. One and all feel that the thing must be staged, and the central figure presented not as an individual but as a force gathering into itself innumerable other forces and acting in an immense theatre with audience and chorus and infernal noises for its accompaniment. Mr. Hardy has already given us the first instalment of his "Dynasts," and it has been well praised by discerning critics. The second, which is now before us, is a work of at least equal merit. Imperfect sometimes in its execution, it is wholly admirable in its conception. Parts of it may fall below the level of high poetry, but the idea is unfailingly poetical and it governs the whole work. "A Panoramic Show" Mr. Hardy calls it—a show in which humanity at its most tragic moment passes in array before the spirit of destiny, the spirit of mocking laughter, and the spirits of pity. Plot or unity in the ordinary sense it has not and cannot have. The scenes are variations on one theme—that theme being both the greatness of man, as measured by himself, and his infinite littleness and helplessness in the hands that fashion and drive him. Wherever Mr. Hardy takes us that thought is with him, and his chorus of spirits chimes in to show us the pity and the terror and the sardonic humour of it all.

Readers of Mr. Hardy's first volume will be familiar with his scheme. He takes some striking episode on the battlefield, in the palace, in the Cabinet of the statesman, and weaves a brief dramatic dialogue in which the leading historical characters take part. Battles and pageants are described in what Mr. Hardy calls "Dumb Show"—descriptions in prose which fill the place of stage directions. With rare exceptions, the characters talk in blank-verse, but the commenting chorus of spirits often speaks in rhyme and uses a variety of ingenious metres, which, for some rather obscure reason, are sometimes printed as prose. The present volume takes us from the battle of Jena (1806) to the beginning of the Moscow campaign (1811). It opens with a scene in which Fox rejects with scorn the proposal of the conspirator Guillet de la Gevrillière that he should aid and abet him in the assassination of Napoleon. At the beginning the question is posed for us whether the assassination would not have been good morality and for the benefit of humanity. Then we see Prussia smitten at Jena, Napoleon at Berlin issuing the famous decrees, and next at Tilsit, with the Czar and the King of Prussia and the unfortunate Queen Louisa, of whom Mr. Hardy gives us a pathetic picture. Talleyrand watches narrowly to see that Napoleon resists her tearful pleadings. Then the scene shifts to Spain, where England takes up the struggle against the tyrant who has disposed of Charles IV. and his son by treachery and forced his brother Joseph on the Spanish throne. Now we are with Moore's army in its miserable retreat, and the story of Corunna is told again in a singularly beautiful and impressive form. Next we are on the plains of Wagram, and watch the battle in company with the distracted Emperor Francis; then we go back again to Spain, where Wellington comes on the scene; then by another jump to Brighton, where "Prinny" is entertaining his friends in the Pavilion; and next, for a dramatic contrast, to the miserable island of Walcheren, where a gallant army lies rotting. Mr. Hardy rises into poetry of a high order in his "Chorus of Pities" in lamentation of their fruitless suffering. From that we pass to the lamentable story of poor Josephine and her sad casting-off by her tyrant in his desire for a grand alliance and an heir, and so to the coming of Marie Louise and the birth of the King of Rome. A little later we are back in Spain, and witness the awful fight at Albuera; and yet other scenes show us the unhappy King George at Windsor in one of his paroxysms, and the Prince Regent with his cronies at Carlton House. Mr. Hardy is keenly alive to the dramatic value of a "sound of revelry by night" as a background to the devilish business of fighting.

Mr. Hardy's treatment of these themes has a rare quality, and he misses comparatively few opportunities. We should have liked a scene about the battle of Copenhagen, or, still better, a scene showing Canning in debate with his colleagues about the seizure of the Danish fleet. That episode remains one of the leading cases of historical casuistry, and there must surely be high dramatic possibilities in it as a theme for a poet. Mr. Hardy, however, would perhaps reject it on the ground that he is dealing not with the moralities of the human plane but with the cosmic forces which "roll earth and heaven and men and gods along." We submit, as a point of criticism, that these leaps into the cosmic do not aid but rather hinder the poetic effect, since the highest kind of poetry is that which expresses the human feeling about humanity as it lives its life on the old brown earth. Thus a real opportunity for poetry is lost when the Spirit of the Years chimes in after the lamentation of the Walcheren victims. The Spirit gives no consolation. It does not tell them that they also do their part who fall on the forlorn hope or are sent to slaughter by a reckless Minister or blundering General. Its voice is this:

> Men pass to dark corruption, at the best,
> Ere I can count five score: these why not now?—
> The Immanent Shaper builds Its beings so
> Whether ye sigh their sighs with them or no!

This kills poetry, not merely because it banishes sentiment but because it takes the meaning out of life. For if indeed "the Immanent Shaper builds Its beings so," the life of man and his destiny is no fitter subject for poetry than the spinning of the roulette wheel.

It is this pessimism, or rather this positive delight in attributing everything to blind forces, which makes Mr. Hardy's poetry fall short of the highest. He is best in his descriptive and declamatory passages, but his choruses seldom have the reflective vein with which the Greek tempered his recourse to fates and furies. From a purely literary point of view they have a rough oddity of language which at least avoids the commonplace and often achieves an original and impressive effect. Thus:

CHORUS OF THE PITIES (aerial music).

> The soul of a nation distrest
> Is aflame,
> And heaving with eager unrest
> In its aim
> To assert its old prowess, and stouten its chronicled fame!

SEMICHORUS I.

> It boils in a boisterous thrill
> Through the mart,
> Unconscious well-nigh as the Will
> Of its part:
> Would it wholly might be so, and feel not the forthcoming smart!

SEMICHORUS II.

> In conclaves no voice of reflection
> Is heard,
> King, Councillors, grudge circumspection
> A word,
> And victory is visioned, and seemings as facts are averred.

> Yes, the soul of a nation
> Is aflame,
> And heaving with eager unrest
> In its aim
> At supreme desperations to blazon the national name!

Mr. Hardy's blank-verse is strangely uneven. Its model is clearly the Shakespearian historical play, and it is often highly successful on that line. For example, let us quote Napoleon's soliloquy before divorcing Josephine:

> The trustless, timorous lease of human life
> Warns me to hedge in my diplomacy.
> The sooner, then, the safer! Ay, this eve,
> This very night, will I take steps to rid
> My morrows of the weird contingencies
> That vision round and make one hollow-eyed. . . .
> The unexpected, lurid death of Lannes—
> Rigid as iron, reaped down like a straw—
> Tiptoed Assassination haunting round
> In unthought thoroughfares, the near success
> Of Staps the madman, argue to forbid
> The riskful blood of my provisioned line
> And potence for dynastic empery
> To linger vialled in my veins alone.
> Perhaps within this very house and hour,
> Under an innocent mask of Love or Hope,
> Some enemy queues my ways to coffin me. . . .
> When at the first clash of the late campaign,
> A bold belief in Austria's star prevailed,
> There pulsed quick pants of expectation round
> Among the cowering kings, that too well told
> What would have fared had I been overthrown!
> So; I must send down shoots to future time
> Who'll guard my standard and my story there;
> And a way opens.—Better I had not
> Bespoke a wife from Alexander's house.

Most of this is admirable; but, on the other hand, there are some extraordinarily bathetic passages, which suggest that Mr. Hardy's sense of humour becomes intermittent when he writes poetry. Think, for instance, of this:

HESSE HOMBERG.

> Wartensleben, Mugar—almost all our best—
> *Bleed more or less profusely.*

The italics are our own, and the meaning is that the persons mentioned are seriously wounded. This is the report of an Aide-de-Camp at the most stirring moment in the battle of Wagram. On the next page another Aide-de-Camp reports to the Emperor that "the issue wears a dirty look just now," and the Emperor answers (gloomily):

> Yes; I have seen as much for some good while.
> But he retreats with blows, and *orderly*.

If he must speak like that he ought at least to have said "orderlily." A little later a Minister comes forward and tells the Emperor that

> These walls no longer yield safe shade for you,
> Or facile outlook.

He had better have been quite vulgar and said that the place was "getting too hot for him." These blots are a pity, and we dwell on them without mercy because Mr. Hardy can avoid them, if he chooses, and there is another volume yet to come.

The Tribune (London) Feb 9 - 1906 -

A TITANIC DRAMA.

[PUBLISHED TO-DAY.]

MR. THOMAS HARDY is working steadily through his gigantic enterprise of "A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars in three parts, nineteen acts, and 130 scenes." This Second Part carries us from the death of Pitt to a little beyond the battle of Albuera. The "panoramic show," as the author himself calls it, discloses to us the battlefields of Jena and Auerstadt, the meeting of the Emperors at Tilsit, the battle of Vimiera, Sir John Moore's retreat, Corunna, Wagram, Talavera, Walcheren, the divorce of Josephine, the marriage of Napoleon and Marie Louise, the lines of Torres Vedras, the birth of the King of Rome, Albuera, King George's padded-room at Windsor, and a revel of the Regency at Carlton House. Interstices are filled in with minor episodes and, as in the First Part, a troop of "Phantom Intelligences"—Spirits of the Pities, Spirits Sinister and Ironic, Spirits of Rumour, Recording Angels, etc.—provide, in italics, a running commentary on the spectacle.

A GRANDIOSE DESIGN.

There can be no doubt that this is a grandiose design which Mr. Hardy is patiently, indomitably working out. Nor is it questionable that the work bears the impress of an original and powerful spirit. We may wonder whether Mr. Hardy might not have been better employed than in pulling the strings of these fitful puppet-shows on "this wide and universal theatre." We may question whether "The Dynasts" will ultimately take rank in English literature beside "Jude the Obscure" and "Life's Little Ironies," and "Wessex Poems." But, for the moment, at any rate, such questionings are idle. We have to consider, not what Mr. Hardy might, could, would, or should have given us, but what he has actually given us; and that is a fascinating series of dissolving views, or glimpses of history seen through the medium of a peculiar poetic temperament.

His success or failure must ultimately be determined by two tests: the test of style, in its largest acceptation, and the test of philosophy. In other words, do his pictures justify themselves by a convincing vividness, and do his comments justify the opinion of Aristotle that "poetry is more philosophical than history"?

THE TEST OF STYLE.

For my part, I cannot but regret that Mr. Hardy should have chosen for his very unconventional endeavour the conventional instrument of blank verse. He cannot divest his blank verse of Elizabethan echoes; and where he does succeed in being entirely original, it is by adopting forms of diction which seem hopelessly incongruous with the stately iambic. In the last four lines of the following passage we have an instance of pure Elizabethanism. Prince Hohenlohe, on the field of Jena, hears, from afar, the cannon of Auerstadt, and thus expresses himself:—

That means the Duke of Brunswick, I conceive,
Impacting on the enemy's further force, . .
God grant his star less lurid rays than ours,
Or this too pregnant, hoarsely-groaning day
Shall, 'ere its loud delivery be done,
Have twinned disasters to the fatherland
That fifty years will fail to sepulchre!

Anyone coming upon these four lines apart from their context would assign them without hesitation to some chronicle play of the year 1590 or thereabouts; and, though the image in itself is fine, it is hard to see what artistic advantage is gained by making a German general of just a century ago express himself in the key of Tamburlaine.

Here is another admirably Elizabethan touch, where a lady of the Prussian Court describes the demeanour of Queen Louisa under the shock of disaster:—

Her heroism
So schools her sense of her calamities
As out of grief to carve new queenliness,
And turn a mobile mien to statuesque,
Save for a sliding tear.

This is in itself beautiful writing; but the associations inseparable from it are surely out of place. Take, now, a passage which is certainly not Elizabethan—but one almost wishes it were. It is Napoleon who speaks:—

Tiptoed Assassination haunting round
In unthought thoroughfares, the near success
Of Staps the madman, argue to forbid
The riskful blood of my provisioned line
And potence for dynastic empery
To linger vialled in my veins alone.

The prose scenes, or scenes mainly in prose, are often very powerful. Good instances are the terrible picture of the cellar near Astorga during the retreat of Sir John Moore, and the passage in the padded chamber at Windsor. One does not, however, quite see the poetical value of the obstetric realism with which the birth of the King of Rome is dramatized.

THE PHILOSOPHIC TEST.

The second question to be answered is whether, with all his machinery of circumambient "Intelligences," Mr. Hardy succeeds in suggesting to us a new, or true, or luminous philosophy? It may be said at once that his philosophy of history is, in fact, a metaphysic of history. He sees in the Napoleonic wars nothing but a wrangle of "Dynasts," a "Great Historic Calamity, or Clash of Peoples, artificially brought about." In other words, he practically renounces the effort to give an account of the bewildering phenomenon in terms of psychologic cause and effect, taking refuge instead in the theory of a blindly-mischievous Immanent Will. Now, whatever the metaphysical value of this theory or symbol, it has one great artistic disadvantage. It leads to an insistent monotony in the comments of the Intelligences. They seem to think that they achieve variety by constantly presenting the Immanent Will under a new synonym; but it matters very little whether "It" be called Immanent Will, or Immanent Intent, or Unweeting Urger, or Rapt Determinator. A purely pessimistic interpretation of the Napoleonic welter is admissible enough; but there is a querulousness in the pessimism of Mr. Hardy's Intelligences which scarcely seems to make for true enlightenment.

But if the philosophic justification of the poem is doubtful, there can be no doubt of the originality and power of many of the lyric interludes. In spite of some peculiarities of manner, Mr. Hardy is, in my estimation, one of our greatest living poets—even in verse. Some of the lyrics in this volume are as fine as anything he has done. The most striking of all, perhaps, is the lament of Walcheren, with the comment of the Spirit of the Years; but this song of Albuera lends itself more readily to quotation:—

They come, beset by riddling hail;
They sway like sedges in a gale;
They fail, and win, and win, and fail.
Albuera!

They gain the ground there, yard by yard,
Their brows and hair and lashes charred,
Their blackened teeth set firm and hard.

Their mad assailants rave and reel,
And face, as men who scorn to feel,
The close-lined, three-edged prongs of steel.

Till faintness follows closing-in,
When, faltering headlong down, they spin
Like leaves. But those pay well who win,
Albuera.

* * * * * *

Hide their hacked bones, Earth!—deep, deep
deep,
Where harmless worms caress and creep.—
What man can grieve? What woman weep?
Better than waking is to sleep! Albuera!

As I copy these lines I feel remorseful for anything said above in disparagement of the poem whereof they form part. In any case the reservations I have felt bound to make in no way impair my deep regard for Mr. Hardy's genius.

WILLIAM ARCHER.

"The Dynasts: A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars," by Thomas Hardy. Part Second. London: Macmillan and Co.

Globe March 16

MR. HARDY'S TRILOGY.

PART II.

It is stated that Mr. Thomas Hardy has decided definitely to produce no more works of fiction; to quit finally the field wherein he laboured so long to his own credit and the world's good fortune. Slow as we have been to accept, as unalterable, a fiat that must be attended with such great loss to the reading public, the truth of it would seem to be largely established by the nature of the work on which Mr. Hardy is now engaged. The second part of "The Dynasts"—just published by Messrs. Macmillan and Co.—bears even more obviously than did the first part (issued two years ago), the impress of deep thought and laborious care. No portion of it has the ease and spontaneity characteristic of the best fiction—such fiction as "Under the Greenwood Tree," "Far From the Madding Crowd," and "Tess of the D'Urbervilles." The great historic episode of Napoleonic [illegible]

"The Dynasts" with grave and sober dignity. There are rugged lines in the verse; there are situations indicated by passages of grim and whimsical humour. The choice of incident is not always of the happiest; and where it is happy, the treatment is occasionally disappointing—for instance, in the case of "The Field of Wagram." But there is no doubt that we have here a noble historic presentment—one remarkable for breadth of conception, grasp of detail, truth of vision. We have an astonishing power of producing in the reader the dual sense of participation and detachment; so that, while he seems to be present at, and intimately concerned with, the action progressing, he is at the same time contemplating it from some far-removed "point of sight," whence he may behold "the kingdoms of the world" and all "the glory of them." The grouping of the scenes is as able as the grouping of the persons concerned in them; and it would be idle to deny to Mr. Hardy, as the writer of "The Dynasts," a very considerable share of the dramatic sense.

Take the divisional arrangement of Act III. The English under Sir John Moore are retreating towards Coruña. "The eye of the spectator rakes the road from the interior of a cellar which opens upon it." . . . "In the gloom of the cellar are heaps of damp straw, in which ragged figures are lying half-buried." The dialogue of Scenes I. and II. is chiefly among these deserters, who watch the passage of their comrades towards the sea. The talk is low, brutal, sensual at times, at others maudlin from intoxication; but always abundantly in keeping with place and occasion. Along the road straggle now a little company of English and Spanish soldiers, now a team of mules or a file of ox-carts, now a train of baggage waggons bearing sick and wounded, now a group of officers with Sir John Moore at their head. The reader shivers with the wretches among the straw, or rides beside the stragglers toiling on, or from some imaginative height receives a weird impression of the long road and its human burden always passing—passing—to answer fate's imperative trumpet-call. At length comes into view Napoleon and his Staff, with the Imperial Guard. The Emperor receives from a courier the ultimatum of the English Government, and dispatches signifying the attitudes of Austria and Russia. The air grows thicker with portents of "crimson war . . . faced to its fell worst," as Napoleon grimly sums up the accounts between himself and the European Powers, and commits to Soult and Ney the duty of annihilating the British force under Moore.

The scene shifts to the battlefield before Coruña; and the spectator beholds, in "dumb show," the decisive actions of the day. Moore is struck and borne off; and the conversation is heard of a pair of deserting stragglers, won back to duty by the recollection of their leader's invocation to his men to "remember Egypt." Then into the foreground advances the melancholy little group whose centre is the dying Moore, and a scene of much pathos is developed, while the news of the battle is heard by the fallen hero. The following scene, a wonderfully impressive episode, shows the burial at dawn, by lantern-light, of the saviour of the British force. The Act's events are rounded off by a transition of locality to a Vienna café, where a group, including a single Englishman, discuss the death of Moore, the safe embarkation of his troops, and the general European situation. This Act, with its five Scenes, is the most artistically successful of the drama, and it is admirably typical of the whole. Detached episodes in other divisions are very striking—notably, perhaps, the reception by the unfortunate King and Queen of Prussia of the Dictator, who for one brief moment is almost won to generosity by the pleading of Louisa's beauty and courage. Striking, again, though in far differing sort, is the incident in which the poor, mad old King of England is visited by his doctors, and babbles of his lost child; while the physicians endeavour to rouse his interest in the news of the victory of Albuera.

Opinions may differ widely as to the success of Mr. Hardy in his new rôle of dramatic poet; but we believe that argument will be legitimate only on the score of an obvious lack of feeling for rhythm. The quality of dramatic, if of no other, verse can be estimated accurately only according to the nature of its immediate effect on the reader or the audience. If the impressions it conveys are immensely vivid, arresting, significant; if the personalities it introduces are clearly defined, and their share in the action never disputable; if it can express a lofty sentiment without bombast, passion without rhetoric, and simple humanness without tedium, surely it must be largely characteristic of that poetic form in which were couched the noblest works in all our literature! The Shakespearean echoes in Mr. Hardy's lines are, we admit, at times oddly incongruous; but they at least serve to assure us how thoroughly the writer has steeped himself in the best and purest dramatic poetry; and in the rendering of commanding historic individualities, no form could have better served his purpose than the blank verse that he handles with so much rugged power.

A STUPENDOUS DRAMA.

The Dynasts, of which the second part has just been published,* is described on its title-page as a drama consisting of nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes, comprised in three parts. Obviously so stupendous a work could never be exhibited as a whole on the modern stage, for, even if the energies of the actors sufficed to carry them through, the audience would long before the end have melted away. In the preface to the first part Mr. Hardy explains the reasons that led him to adopt this form for his latest (and perhaps greatest) work. He contends, contrary to the common acceptation, that it is an eminently readable shape, and suggests that mental performance may eventually be the fate of all drama other than that of contemporary or frivolous life. We confess that, while we approached this drama without enthusiasm and with a certain bias against it, the more we have read it the more it pleased us and justified the author's choice of a medium. The division into acts and scenes and the dramatic form generally tend, it seems to us, both to lucidity and to economy. The author would have required many times the number of pages he has used to give in narrative form the story of the Great Historical Calamity, as he calls it, and if he had himself possessed the ambition to write a history of the Napoleonic wars it would have been a matter of doubt whether the result would have been acceptable to readers at large. Probably most of those who will read the drama would have passed the history by, unless Mr. Hardy had essayed an historical novel with Napoleon for its chief character. We are not sure that such a work would not have appealed more widely than the present, simply because of the rooted prejudice in so many minds against the dramatic form. If this can be conquered the reader will find a rich reward. The first part ended with the death of Pitt, his last hours made unhappy by reflections upon the terrible straits to which his country had been brought by Bonaparte's successes, culminating in Austerlitz. It was on receipt of the news of that victory that Pitt said, pointing to the map of Europe:

> Roll up that map. 'Twill not be needed now
> These ten years! Realms, laws, peoples, dynasties,
> Are churning to a pulp within the maw
> Of empire-making Lust and personal Gain!

The first Act of Part the Second introduces us to Fox's lodgings, where, as Foreign Secretary in the new Ministry of All-the-Talents, Fox sits at a table writing. In this first scene the manner of life of a Cabinet Minister in the Georgian period is indicated by a few deft touches. Fox is described as 'a stout, swarthy man, with shaggy eyebrows,' whose breathing is somewhat obstructed. 'His clothes,' it is added, 'look as though they had been slept in.' To him is brought in a crazy foreigner, Guillet de Gevrillière, who has contrived by various disguises to reach the English Minister in order to broach to him a plan for murdering Napoleon. What possible advantage Gevrillière could have hoped for from making Fox his confidant, even to the telling him details of the place and method of taking off his victim does not appear; but there is no hesitation in Fox's response:

> Sir, your unconscienced hardihood confounds me,
> And your mind's measure of my character
> Insults it sorely. By your late-sent lines
> Of specious import, by your bland address—
> I have been led to prattle hopefully
> With a cut-throat confessed!
>
> [The head-constable and the secretary enter at the same moment.]
>
> Ere worse befall,
> Sir, up and get you gone most dexterously!
> Conduct this man; lose never sight of him (to the officer)
> Till haled aboard some anchor-weighing craft
> Bound to remotest coasts from us and France.

The end of Gevrillière is vaguely hinted at by a speaker in a later scene, who repeats a rumour that the man had fallen into the hands of Napoleon's officials, and had died under the tortures to which he had been subjected to compel him to disclose his accomplices.

The second scene is entirely occupied by the voices of unseen spirits, pitiful, ironical and sinister, and of recording angels, concluding with a quatrain from the 'Spirit of the Years':

> Draw down the curtain, then, and overscreen
> This too-protracted verbal fencing-scene;
> And let us turn to clanging foot and horse,
> Ordnance, and all the enginry of Force!

The first effect on the reader's mind of this supernatural element is one of surprise, followed by a sense of the grotesque. The author's apology for the feature may, or may not, be accepted. He says (in the Preface to Part the First):

> It was thought proper to introduce, as supernatural spectators of the terrestrial drama, certain impersonated abstractions, or Intelligences, called Spirits. They are intended to be taken by the reader for what they may be worth as contrivances of the fancy merely. Their doctrines are but tentative, and are advanced with little eye to a systematised philosophy warranted to lift 'the burthen of the mystery' of this unintelligible world. The chief thing hoped for them is that they and their utterances may have dramatic plausibility enough to procure for them, in the words of Coleridge, 'that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith.' The wide prevalence of the Monistic theory of the Universe forbade, in this twentieth century, the importation of Divine personages from any antique Mythology as ready-made sources or channels of Causation, even in verse, and excluded the celestial machinery of, say, *Paradise Lost*, as peremptorily as that of the *Iliad* or the *Eddas*.

Mr. Hardy's conclusion, that the doctrines popularly identified with Professor Haeckel—which predicate the oneness of the universe, rejecting the dualism of matter and spirit—have obtained such a hold upon people generally that they could not tolerate a chorus of archangels and angels, of devils and imps, on the Miltonian pattern, may or may not be well founded, but his inference therefrom that a chorus of impersonal Intelligences will receive so much acceptance as is implied in a 'suspension of disbelief' has at least the support of experience, as evidenced by the continued existence of the pantomime, and we cannot forget that the most complete belief in a spirit-world has been found compatible even by some of the foremost modern men of science with the pursuit of scientific research on a materialistic basis. If veteran evolutionists (like Mr. A. R. Wallace) and leading physicists (like Sir Oliver Lodge) will consent to sit round tables holding hands with fellow-experimenters in the hope that 'spirits' may manifest their presence, we cannot quarrel with a poet who introduces into his scenes Intelligences whose utterances bear a passable resem-

* *The Dynasts.* By Thomas Hardy. Part II. (Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.)

Reviews of Reviews March - 1906

MR. HARDY'S PANORAMIC DRAMA.

The appearance of the second volume of Thomas Hardy's drama of the Napoleonic wars would in itself have redeemed the publications of the month from the reproach of mediocrity. Whatever may be thought of the form in which Mr. Hardy has chosen to embody his conception, there is no doubt that it is a very challenging presentation of the march of history. It forcibly reminds me of Detaille's famous painting, in which the soldier sleeping in his bivouac dreams that he sees the regiments of the Grande Armée sweeping across the sky. The reader of Mr. Hardy's drama experiences much the same sensation. Before him passes a ceaseless stream of events and scenes and episodes propelled by the invisible but omnipotent power of an overmastering Will. For one brief moment a scene or group emerges from the obscurity, takes definite shape in Mr. Hardy's prose and verse, and vanishes once more, only to be replaced by a new incident which in turn holds the reader's attention. , men and women, from emperors and queens to straggling footsore soldiers, crowd the canvas, one and all the slaves of destiny, and above all is heard the constant murmuring refrain of the aerial spirits commenting on the affairs of the struggling multitudes below. The reader as an onlooker, fascinated and powerless, watches the tremendous drama roll on to its appointed end. (Macmillan. 302 pp. 4s. 6d. net.)

The Tribune (London) Feb 9. 1906.

A TITANIC DRAMA.

[Published To-day.]

MR. THOMAS HARDY is working steadily through his gigantic enterprise of "A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars in three parts, nineteen acts, and 130 scenes." This Second Part carries us from the death of Pitt to a little beyond the battle of Albuera. The "panoramic show," as the author himself calls it, discloses to us the battlefields of Jena and Auerstadt, the meeting of the Emperors at Tilsit, the battle of Vimiera, Sir John Moore's retreat, Corunna, Wagram, Talavera, Walcheren, the divorce of Josephine, the marriage of Napoleon and Marie Louise, the lines of Torres Vedras, the birth of the King of Rome, Albuera, King George's padded-room at Windsor, and a revel of the Regency at Carlton House. Interstices are filled in with minor episodes and, as in the First Part, a troop of "Phantom Intelligences"—Spirits of the Pities, Spirits Sinister and Ironic, Spirits of Rumour, Recording Angels, etc.—provide, in italics, a running commentary on the spectacle.

A GRANDIOSE DESIGN.

There can be no doubt that this is a grandiose design which Mr. Hardy is patiently, indomitably working out. Nor is it questionable that the work bears the impress of an original and powerful spirit. We may wonder whether Mr. Hardy might not have been better employed than in pulling the strings of these fitful puppet-shows on "this wide and universal theatre." We may question whether "The Dynasts" will ultimately take rank in English literature beside "Jude the Obscure" and "Life's Little Ironies," and "Wessex Poems." But, for the moment, at any rate, such questionings are idle. We have to consider, not what Mr. Hardy might, could, would, or should have given us, but what he has actually given us; and that is a fascinating series of dissolving views, or glimpses of history seen through the medium of a peculiar poetic temperament.

His success or failure must ultimately be determined by two tests: the test of style, in its largest acceptation, and the test of philosophy. In other words, do his pictures justify themselves by a convincing vividness, and do his comments justify the opinion of Aristotle that "poetry is more philosophical than history"?

THE TEST OF STYLE.

For my part, I cannot but regret that Mr. Hardy should have chosen for his very unconventional endeavour the conventional instrument of blank verse. He cannot divest his blank verse of Elizabethan echoes; and where he does succeed in being entirely original, it is by adopting forms of diction which seem hopelessly incongruous with the stately iambic. In the last four lines of the following passage we have an instance of pure Elizabethanism. Prince Hohenlohe, on the field of Jena, hears, from afar, the cannon of Auerstadt, and thus expresses himself:—

That means the Duke of Brunswick, I conceive,
Impacting on the enemy's further force, . .
God grant his star less lurid rays than ours,
Or this too pregnant, hoarsely-groaning day
Shall, 'ere its loud delivery be done,
Have twinned disasters to the fatherland
That fifty years will fail to sepulchre!

Anyone coming upon these four lines apart from their context would assign them without hesitation to some chronicle play of the year 1590 or thereabouts; and, though the image in itself is fine, it is hard to see what artistic advantage is gained by making a German general of just a century ago express himself in the key of Tamburlaine.

Here is another admirably Elizabethan touch, where a lady of the Prussian Court describes the demeanour of Queen Louisa under the shock of disaster:—

Her heroism
So schools her sense of her calamities
As out of grief to carve new queenliness,
And turn a mobile mien to statuesque,
Save for a sliding tear.

This is in itself beautiful writing; but the associations inseparable from it are surely out of place. Take, now, a passage which is certainly not Elizabethan—but one almost wishes it were. It is Napoleon who speaks:—

Tiptoed Assassination haunting round
In unthought thoroughfares, the near success
Of Staps the madman, argue to forbid
The riskful blood of my previsioned line
And potence for dynastic empery
To linger vialled in my veins alone.

The prose scenes, or scenes mainly in prose, are often very powerful. Good instances are the terrible picture of the cellar near Astorga during the retreat of Sir John Moore, and the passage in the padded chamber at Windsor. One does not, however, quite see the poetical value of the obstetric realism with which the birth of the King of Rome is dramatised.

THE PHILOSOPHIC TEST.

The second question to be answered is whether, with all his machinery of circumambient "Intelligences," Mr. Hardy succeeds in suggesting to us a new, or true, or luminous philosophy? It may be said at once that his philosophy of history is, in fact, a metaphysic of history. He sees in the Napoleonic wars nothing but a wrangle of "Dynasts," a "Great Historic Calamity, or Clash of Peoples, artificially brought about." In other words, he practically renounces the effort to give an account of the bewildering phenomenon in terms of psychologic cause and effect, taking refuge instead in the theory of a blindly-mischievous Immanent Will. Now, whatever the metaphysical value of this theory or symbol, it has one great artistic disadvantage. It leads to an insistent monotony in the comments of the Intelligences. They seem to think that they achieve variety by constantly presenting the Immanent Will under a new synonym; but it matters very little whether "It" be called Immanent Will, or Immanent Intent, or Unweeting Urger, or Rapt Determinator. A purely pessimistic interpretation of the Napoleonic welter is admissible enough; but there is a querulousness in the pessimism of Mr. Hardy's Intelligences which scarcely seems to make for true enlightenment.

But if the philosophic justification of the poem is doubtful, there can be no doubt of the originality and power of many of the lyric interludes. In spite of some peculiarities of manner, Mr. Hardy is, in my estimation, one of our greatest living poets—even in verse. Some of the lyrics in this volume are as fine as anything he has done. The most striking of all, perhaps, is the lament of Walcheren, with the comment of the Spirit of the Years; but this song of Albuera lends itself more readily to quotation:—

They come, beset by riddling hail;
They sway like sedges in a gale;
They fail, and win, and win, and fail.
Albuera!

They gain the ground there, yard by yard,
Their brows and hair and lashes charred,
Their blackened teeth set firm and hard.

Their mad assailants rave and reel,
And face, as men who scorn to feel,
The close-lined, three-edged prongs of steel.

Till faintness follows closing-in,
When, faltering headlong down, they spin
Like leaves. But those pay well who win,
Albuera.

* * * * * * *

Hide their hacked bones, Earth!—deep, deep deep,
Where harmless worms caress and creep.—
What man can grieve? What woman weep?
Better than waking is to sleep! Albuera!

As I copy these lines I feel remorseful for anything said above in disparagement of the poem whereof they form part. In any case the reservations I have felt bound to make in no way impair my deep regard for Mr. Hardy's genius.

WILLIAM ARCHER.

"The Dynasts: A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars," by Thomas Hardy. Part Second. London: Macmillan and Co.

Globe March 16

MR. HARDY'S TRILOGY.

Part II.

It is stated that Mr. Thomas Hardy has decided definitely to produce no more works of fiction; to quit finally the field wherein he laboured so long to his own credit and the world's good fortune. Slow as we have been to accept, as unalterable, a fiat that must be attended with such great loss to the reading public, the truth of it would seem to be largely established by the nature of the work on which Mr. Hardy is now engaged. The second part of "The Dynasts"—just published by Messrs. Macmillan and Co.—bears even more obviously than did the first part (issued two years ago), the impress of deep thought and laborious care. No portion of it has the ease and spontaneity characteristic of the best fiction—such fiction as "Under the Greenwood Tree," "Far From the Madding Crowd," and "Tess of the D'Urbervilles." The great historic episode of Napoleonic state-making and war-making is treated in "The Dynasts" with grave and sober dignity. There are rugged lines in the verse; there are situations indicated by passages of grim and whimsical humour. The choice of incident is not always of the happiest; and where it is happy, the treatment is occasionally disappointing—for instance, in the case of "The Field of Wagram." But there is no doubt that we have here a noble historic presentment—one remarkable for breadth of conception, grasp of detail, truth of vision. We have an astonishing power of producing in the reader the dual sense of participation and detachment; so that, while he seems to be present at, and intimately concerned with, the action progressing, he is at the same time contemplating it from some far-removed "point of sight," whence he may behold "the kingdoms of the world" and all "the glory of them." The grouping of the scenes is as able as the grouping of the persons concerned in them; and it would be idle to deny to Mr. Hardy, as the writer of "The Dynasts," a very considerable share of the dramatic sense.

Take the divisional arrangement of Act III. The English under Sir John Moore are retreating towards Coruña. "The eye of the spectator rakes the road from the interior of a cellar which opens upon it." . . "In the gloom of the cellar are heaps of damp straw, in which ragged figures are lying half-buried." The dialogue of Scenes I. and II. is chiefly among these deserters, who watch the passage of their comrades towards the sea. The talk is low, brutal, sensual at times, at others maudlin from intoxication; but always abundantly in keeping with place and occasion. Along the road straggle now a little company of English and Spanish soldiers, now a team of mules or a file of ox-carts, now a train of baggage waggons bearing sick and wounded, now a group of officers with Sir John Moore at their head. The reader shivers with the wretches among the straw, or rides beside the stragglers toiling on, or from some imaginative height receives a weird impression of the long road and its human burden always passing—passing—to answer fate's imperative trumpet-call. At length comes into view Napoleon and his Staff, with the Imperial Guard. The Emperor receives from a courier the ultimatum of the English Government, and dispatches signifying the attitudes of Austria and Russia. The air grows thicker with portents of "crimson war . . faced to its fell worst," as Napoleon grimly sums up the accounts between himself and the European Powers, and commits to Soult and Ney the duty of annihilating the British force under Moore.

The scene shifts to the battlefield before Coruña; and the spectator beholds, in "dumb show," the decisive actions of the day. Moore is struck and borne off; and the conversation is heard of a pair of deserting stragglers, won back to duty by the recollection of their leader's invocation to his men to "remember Egypt." Then into the foreground advances the melancholy little group whose centre is the dying Moore, and a scene of much pathos is developed, while the news of the battle is heard by the fallen hero. The following scene, a wonderfully impressive episode, shows the burial at dawn, by lantern-light, of the saviour of the British force. The Act's events are rounded off by a transition of locality to a Vienna café, where a group, including a single Englishman, discuss the death of Moore, the safe embarkation of his troops, and the general European situation. This Act, with its five Scenes, is the most artistically successful of the drama, and it is admirably typical of the whole. Detached episodes in other divisions are very striking—notably, perhaps, the reception by the unfortunate King and Queen of Prussia of the Dictator, who for one brief moment is almost won to generosity by the pleading of Louisa's beauty and courage. Striking, again, though in far differing sort, is the incident in which the poor, mad old King of England is visited by his doctors, and babbles of his lost child; while the physicians endeavour to rouse his interest in the news of the victory of Albuera.

Opinions may differ widely as to the success of Mr. Hardy in his new rôle of dramatic poet; but we believe that argument will be legitimate only on the score of an obvious lack of feeling for rhythm. The quality of dramatic, if of no other, verse can be estimated accurately only according to the nature of its immediate effect on the reader or the audience. If the impressions it conveys are immensely vivid, arresting, significant; if the personalities it introduces are clearly defined, and their share in the action never disputable; if it can express a lofty sentiment without bombast, passion without rhetoric, and simple humanness without tedium, surely it must be largely characteristic of that poetic form in which were couched the noblest works in all our literature! The Shakespearean echoes in Mr. Hardy's lines are, we admit, at times oddly incongruous; but they at least serve to assure us how thoroughly the writer has steeped himself in the best and purest dramatic poetry; and in the rendering of commanding historic individualities, no form could have better served his purpose than the blank verse that he handles with so much rugged power.

A STUPENDOUS DRAMA.

The Dynasts, of which the second part has just been published,* is described on its title-page as a drama consisting of nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes, comprised in three parts. Obviously so stupendous a work could never be exhibited as a whole on the modern stage, for, even if the energies of the actors sufficed to carry them through, the audience would long before the end have melted away. In the preface to the first part Mr. Hardy explains the reasons that led him to adopt this form for his latest (and perhaps greatest) work. He contends, contrary to the common acceptation, that it is an eminently readable shape, and suggests that mental performance may eventually be the fate of all drama other than that of contemporary or frivolous life. We confess that, while we approached this drama without enthusiasm and with a certain bias against it, the more we have read it the more it pleased us and justified the author's choice of a medium. The division into acts and scenes and the dramatic form generally tend, it seems to us, both to lucidity and to economy. The author would have required many times the number of pages he has used to give in narrative form the story of the Great Historical Calamity, as he calls it, and if he had himself possessed the ambition to write a history of the Napoleonic wars it would have been a matter of doubt whether the result would have been acceptable to readers at large. Probably most of those who will read the drama would have passed the history by, unless Mr. Hardy had essayed an historical novel with Napoleon for its chief character. We are not sure that such a work would not have appealed more widely than the present, simply because of the rooted prejudice in so many minds against the dramatic form. If this can be conquered the reader will find a rich reward. The first part ended with the death of Pitt, his last hours made unhappy by reflections upon the terrible straits to which his country had been brought by Bonaparte's successes, culminating in Austerlitz. It was on receipt of the news of that victory that Pitt said, pointing to the map of Europe :

> Roll up that map. 'Twill not be needed now
> These ten years! Realms, laws, peoples, dynasties,
> Are churning to a pulp within the maw
> Of empire-making Lust and personal Gain!

The first Act of Part the Second introduces us to Fox's lodgings, where, as Foreign Secretary in the new Ministry of All-the-Talents, Fox sits at a table writing. In this first scene the manner of life of a Cabinet Minister in the Georgian period is indicated by a few deft touches. Fox is described as 'a stout, swarthy man, with shaggy eyebrows,' whose breathing is somewhat obstructed. 'His clothes,' it is added, 'look as though they had been slept in.' To him is brought in a crazy foreigner, Guillet de Gevrillière, who has contrived by various disguises to reach the English Minister in order to broach to him a plan for murdering Napoleon. What possible advantage Gevrillière could have hoped for from making Fox his confidant, even to the telling him details of the place and method of taking off his victim does not appear; but there is no hesitation in Fox's response :

> Sir, your unconscienced hardihood confounds me,
> And your mind's measure of my character
> Insults it sorely. By your late-sent lines
> Of specious import, by your bland address—
> I have been led to prattle hopefully
> With a cut-throat confessed!
>
> [The head-constable and the secretary enter at the same moment.]
>
> Ere worse befall,
> Sir, up and get you gone most dexterously!
> Conduct this man; lose never sight of him (to the officer)
> Till haled aboard some anchor-weighing craft
> Bound to remotest coasts from us and France.

The end of Gevrillière is vaguely hinted at by a speaker in a later scene, who repeats a rumour that the man had fallen into the hands of Napoleon's officials, and had died under the tortures to which he had been subjected to compel him to disclose his accomplices.

The second scene is entirely occupied by the voices of unseen spirits, pitiful, ironical and sinister, and of recording angels, concluding with a quatrain from the 'Spirit of the Years' :

> Draw down the curtain, then, and oversereen
> This too-protracted verbal fencing-scene;
> And let us turn to clanging foot and horse,
> Ordnance, and all the enginry of Force!

The first effect on the reader's mind of this supernatural element is one of surprise, followed by a sense of the grotesque. The author's apology for the feature may, or may not, be accepted. He says (in the Preface to Part the First) :

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blance to some of the messages received at spiritualistic *séances*. This much we may say without prejudice.

Mr. Hardy frankly tells his reader that he expects him to fill in the gaps of the story for himself, in so far as filling in is required after the choruses have supplied their valuable comments. 'Should he [the reader],' says Mr. Hardy, 'refuse to do this, a historical presentment on an intermittent plan, in which the *dramatis personæ* number some hundreds, exclusive of crowds and armies, becomes in his individual case unsuitable.' Certainly to anyone who had never read the life of Napoleon Bonaparte this drama would appear in the light of a tiresome puzzle, and perhaps the pleasure to be derived from it bears some relation to the vividness of the reader's recollection of the historical narrative. We should recommend even those who think themselves acquainted with the main points of the great Emperor's career to furbish up their recollections before tackling Mr. Hardy's work.

Although a third of the drama remains unpublished, it is possible to contrast Mr. Hardy's conception of its chief character with the views entertained by contemporaries and by moderns. As to the views of Napoleon's contemporaries, they are freely given to us in the drama itself. For example, we are permitted to overhear the remarks of the ladies of the Prussian Court as they await in Berlin the arrival of the conqueror and his legions; then Queen Louisa of Prussia finds him proof against her blandishments even to the granting of a single town, Magdeburg, beyond the territory he had agreed to restore. The ladies of the Court judged him to be sacrilegious, on slender evidence; the Queen held him to be adamantine; while all that the Spirit of the Years saw in his refusal of the latter's request was:

> *He's of the few in Europe who discern*
> *The working of the Will.*

The Queen probably thought he was merely putting her off with a lame excuse when he really gave what he regarded as a clinching reason in the words:

> Know you, my fair,
> That I—ay, I—in this deserve your pity.—
> Some force within me, baffling mine intent,
> Hurries me onward, whether I will or no.
> My star, my star is what's to blame—not I.
> It is unswervable!

Intense superstition was, therefore, a leading trait in Napoleon's character. And if looked at carefully that, surely, explains a great deal and should relieve him from some of the opprobrium that is still heaped upon his name. For example, the most frequently heard charge against him is that of an arch-murderer, some twelve million human lives having been placed to his account by some statisticians. Now, on the assumption that he was merely carrying out the sentences of the 'Immanent Will' (to use Mr. Hardy's synonym for Divine Providence), his position and responsibility are lowered to that of an executioner, and, however disagreeable that functionary's duties may be, few will be found who would call him a murderer.

Among the incidental plots in this Second Part one of the most interesting is the account of the Spanish Queen's relations with her Royal spouse and the way in which Napoleon took advantage of the domestic difficulties of the Spanish King to impose his brother Joseph as Sovereign at Madrid. Here, it is true, there are several gaps to be filled in, but the main facts of the story can be gathered from the drama. It gives the 'Spirit of the Years' occasion to remark as follows:

> *So the Will heaves through Space, and moulds the times,*
> *With mortals for Its fingers! We shall see*
> *Again men's passions, virtues, visions, crimes,*
> *Obey resistingly*
> *The purposive, unmotived, dominant Thing*
> *Which sways in brooding dark their wayfaring!*

Several scenes are laid in England, giving glimpses of the Court of the Prince Regent at Brighton, of the palace-prison of the mad king, George III., and of London club-life at that period. For intensity few scenes are more remarkable than that in which the doctors visit George III. and exhibit a callousness verging on brutality, which is not a common trait in the medical character. And, but for their familiarity in other works, the scenes between Napoleon and Josephine, when the divorce is arranged and completed, present a very pathetic story, while revealing the heartless nature of the former. The battle scenes, especially the burial of Sir John Moore, are marvellous examples of the dramatist's power to visualise such events, but the most *bizarre* of Mr. Hardy's contrivances is the conversation of the British deserters in a Spanish cellar near the road along which the allies are retreating before Napoleon. Parts of these scenes are daring in their realism, but they bring forcibly before us the squalid horrors of war. Finally, be it said, the drama is not for a single reading, but needs a second or third perusal. Then, we think, its power and merits will begin to be appreciated and the reader will cease to be worried as to whether a particular word or phrase is entirely consistent with the best form of poetry.

BRUGES AND WEST FLANDERS.

Bruges and West Flanders. Painted by Amedée Forestier. Described by G. W. T. Omond. (Black. 10s. net.)

THE silting-up of the mouth of the Zwijn—with the mud brought down by the more vigorous Scheldt—turned Bruges from one of the wealthiest and most prosperous of commercial cities into the mere relic of a bygone age that it is to-day. In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the merchant princes of Bruges, whose ships were on every sea, lived in palaces, clothed their wives in the costliest of furs and jewels, and were lordly patrons of art, as the masterpieces of the Flemish school remain to testify. To-day the aspect of Bruges is as far removed from the stir and bustle of commerce as that of the Sahara, and the ancient city seems to be perpetually drowsing and dreaming over its ancient greatness. It is one of those old-world places whose fascination gradually but irresistibly lays hold of all who linger about its silent waterways and streets of quaint beautiful houses, with their high-pitched gables. Something of the charm and beauty of the place Mr. Forestier conveys in his pleasant, skilful pictures, and something of the stirring events of its history Mr. Omond tells in his readable and informing chapters. No one in whom pictures and letterpress arouse the strong wish to see Bruges with his own eyes need fear he will be disappointed. Ypres is not quite so easily accessible as Bruges, but those who have had it in their mind's eye will be more than ever set upon a visit by what they find here. The picturesque little town of Furnes, with its reminiscences of the days of the Spanish occupation and the Inquisition, Nieuport, Coxyde, and other little watering-places along the coast both writer and artist conspire to make attractive by their pleasant co-operation in this book.

A GIGANTIC SERIAL.

"The Dynasts." By Thomas Hardy. Part II. 4s. 6d. net. Macmillan and Co.

Feelings distinctly mixed, with admiration overtopping all, are evoked by the second instalment of Mr. Thomas Hardy's monstrous Napoleonic drama in blank verse, varied by occasional lyrics and prose. It is such a large and magnificent conception, the purpose is fulfilled with so considerable a measure of success, the sense of dramatic tragedy is so well sustained, the work itself is so remarkably unequal, and there is, after all, so keen a sense of wasted effort. The magnitude of the whole

(Evening Standard Feb 12. 1906)

Daily Graphic Feb 9. 1906

MR. HARDY'S "DYNASTS."

["The Dynasts. A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars." By Thomas Hardy. Part Second. (Macmillan and Co.) 4s. 6d. net.]

(Published To-day.)

There are many occasions when criticism finds itself hard pressed to keep its balance; but no dilemma of the critic is more difficult than that

Recent English Poetry.*

When Mr. Thomas Hardy published the first section of "The Dynasts," he warned his public that the rest of the work might never see the light. Apparently, the reception given to that experimental publication has been of an encouraging nature, for we now have the second section of this colossal and deeply-moving work, and may reasonably hope for the third section needed in order to complete it. The six acts and forty-three scenes of the instalment here given us begin just before the battle of Jena and end with Napoleon's crushing defeat in the Peninsula. Wagram and Walcheren are intermediate episodes, and an element of quasi-private interest is provided by the scenes which lead to the divorce of Josephine and the subsequent Austrian marriage. As before, we have again the rapid shifting of action, the panoramic stage-setting, and the supernatural apparatus that proved so bewilderingly impressive when we first made their acquaintance. The author thinks nothing of a jump from Coruña to Vienna, or of a scene that requires us to take in at one glance both London and Paris, and the intervening leagues of land and sea. Nor does he hesitate, when human speech seems inadequate, to invoke the hosts of "phantom intelligences" created by his cosmic imagination, and to record their comment — pitiful, sinister, and ironic — upon the actions of the human puppets whose antics they view from their serene point of vantage. It is to the utterances of these ethereal beings that we must look for whatever of poetry there may be found in this dramatic pageant. The unfortunate Walcheren expedition inspires the finest poetical outburst of any length to be found within the volume. It is the following Chorus of Pities, which we are to take as echoing the plaint of the stricken English soldiery, and to think of as sung to aërial music:

"We who withstood the blasting blaze of war
When marshalled by the gallant Moore awhile,
Beheld the grazing death-bolt with a smile,
Closed combat edge to edge and bore to bore,
Now rot upon this Isle!

"The ever wan morass, the dune, the blear
Sandweed, and tepid pool, and putrid smell,
Emaciate purpose to a fractious fear,
Beckon the body to its last low cell —
A chink no chart will tell.

"O ancient Delta, where the fen-lights flit!
Ignoble sediment of loftier lands,
Thy humour clings about our hearts and hands
And solves us to its softness, till we sit
As we were part of it.

"Such force as fever leaves is maddened now,
With tidings trickling in from day to day
Of others' differing fortunes, wording how
They yield their lives to baulk a tyrant's sway —
Yielded not vainly, they!

"In champaigns green and purple, far and near,
In town and thorpe where quiet spire-cocks turn,
Through vales, by rocks, beside the brooding burn
Echoes the aggressor's arrogant career,
And we bent pithless here!

"Here, where each creeping day the creeping file
Draws past with shouldered comrades score on score,
Bearing them to their lightless last asile,
Where weary wave-wails from the clammy shore
Will reach their ears no more.

"We might have fought, and had we died, died well,
Even if in dynasts' discords not our own;
Our death-spot some sad haunter might have shown,
Some tongue have asked our sires or sons to tell
The tale of how we fell.

"But such bechanced not. Like the mist we fade,
No lustrous lines engrave in story we,
Our country's chiefs, for their own fames afraid,
Will leave our names and fates by this pale sea
To perish silently!"

To this chorus the Spirit of the Years replies:

"Why must ye echo as mechanic mimes
These mortal minions' bootless cadences,
Played on the stops of their anatomy
As is the mewling music on the strings
Of yonder ship-masts by the unweeting wind,
Or the frail tune upon this withering sedge
That holds its papery blades against the gale?
— Men pass to dark corruption, at the best,
Ere I can count five score: these why not now? —
The Immanent Shaper builds Its beings so
Whether ye sigh their sighs with them or no!"

And for a stage direction, to close the scene, we read that "the night fog enwraps the isle and the dying English army." This is a grim sort of poetry, but its impressiveness is unquestionable. The conception of the Immanent Shaper here illustrated is the metaphysical basis of Mr. Hardy's drama. It is a conception that sometimes employs the language of Schopenhauer,

"So doth the Will objectify itself,"

and suggests, now the mood of Lucretius, now that of the poet of "Vastness," but without the note of passionate faith that relieves the despair of that outcry. It appears over and over again. The Spirit Ironic thus disposes of the defeat of Prussia and the grief of Queen Louise:

"So the Will plays at flux and reflux still.
This monarchy, one-half whose pedestal
Is built of Polish bones, has bones home-made!
Let the fair woman bear it. Poland did."

*The Dynasts. A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. By Thomas Hardy. Part Second. New York: The Macmillan Co.

Nero. By Stephen Phillips. New York: The Macmillan Co.

Selections from the Poetry of John Payne. Made by Tracy and Lucy Robinson. New York: John Lane Co.

New Collected Rhymes. By Andrew Lang. New York: Longmans, Green, & Co.

Poems of the Seen and the Unseen. By Charles William Herbert. Oxford: B. H. Blackwell.

Poems of Love and Nature. By Leonard A. Rickett. New York: Longmans, Green, & Co.

The Last Poems of Richard Watson Dixon, D.D. New York: Henry Frowde.

Love's Testament. A Sonnet-Sequence. By G. Constant Lounsbery. New York: John Lane Co.

The Tree of Knowledge. By Mary A. M. Marks. London: David Nutt.

The Four Winds of Eirinn. Poems by Ethna Carbery (Anna McManus). New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co.

The Three Resurrections and the Triumph of Maeve. By Eva Gore-Booth. New York: Longmans, Green, & Co.

(turn over)

The Tribune

A TITANIC D

[PUBLISHED To-

MR. THOMAS HARDY is
through his gigantic
Drama of the Napoleonic
parts, nineteen acts, and 130
Second Part carries us from
Pitt to a little beyond the ba
The "panoramic show," as
self calls it, discloses to us th
Jena and Auerstadt, the m
Emperors at Tilsit, the batt
Sir John Moore's retreat, Cor
Talavera, Walcheren, the
Josephine, the marriage
and Marie Louise, the li
Vedras, the birth of
Rome, Albuera, King Geo
room at Windsor, and a
Regency at Carlton House.
filled in with minor episodes
First Part, a troop of "P
gences"—Spirits of the Pitie
ter and Ironic, Spirits of Run
Angels, etc.—provide, in its
commentary on the spectacle

A GRANDIOSE DESI

There can be no doubt
grandiose design which
patiently, indomitably worki
it questionable that the wor
press of an original and
We may wonder whether M
not have been better em
pulling the strings of
puppet-shows on "this
versal theatre." We may q
"The Dynasts" will ultimat
English literature beside "
scure" and "Life's Little
"Wessex Poems." But, for
any rate, such questionings
have to consider, not what M
could, would, or should hav
what he has actually given
a fascinating series of disse
glimpses of history seen thro
of a peculiar poetic temp
His success or failure mu
determined by two tests: th
in its largest acceptation,
philosophy. In other words,
justify themselves by a convi
and do his comments justify
Aristotle that "poetry is mo
than history"?

THE TEST OF ST

For my part, I cannot but
Hardy should have chosen
conventional endeavour the
strument of blank verse.
his blank verse of Elizabet
where he does succeed in be
ginal, it is by adopting forms
seem hopelessly incongruous
iambic. In the last four lin
ing passage we have an i
Elizabethanism. Prince H
field of Jena, hears, from a
of Auerstadt, and thus expr

That means the Duke of Brun
Impacting on the enemy's fu
God grant his star less luric
Or this too pregnant, hoarse
Shall, 'ere its loud delivery
Have twinned disasters to the
That fifty years will fail to se

Anyone coming upon these
from their context would as
out hesitation to some chro
year 1590 or thereabouts;
image in itself is fine, it is
artistic advantage is gaine
German general of just a cen
himself in the key of Tambu

Here is another admira
touch, where a lady of the
describes the demeanour of
der the shock of disaster:—

Her
So schools her sense of her
As out of grief to carve new
And turn a mobile mien to
Save for a sliding tear.

This is in itself beautiful
associations inseparable fro
out of place. Take, now,
is certainly not Elizabethan
wishes it were. It is Napole

Tiptoed Assassination haun
In unthought thoroughfare
Of Staps the madman, arr
The rishful blood of my pr
And potence for dynastic
To linger vialled in my ve

blance to some of the messages received at spiritualistic *séances*. This much we may say without prejudice.

Mr. Hardy frankly tells his reader that he expects him to fill in the gaps of the story for himself, in so far as filling in is required after the choruses have supplied their valuable comments. 'Should he [the reader],' says Mr. Hardy, 'refuse to do this, a historical presentment on an intermittent plan, in which the *dramatis pe*
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facts of the story can be gathered from the drama. It gives the 'Spirit of the Years' occasion to remark as follows:

So the Will heaves through Space, and moulds the times,
With mortals for Its fingers! We shall see
Again men's passions, virtues, visions, crimes,
Obey resistingly
The purposive, unmotived, dominant Thing
Which sways in brooding dark their wayfaring!

Several scenes are laid in England, giving glimpses

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The tragedy of the Spanish expedition is thus foreshadowed by the Spirit of the Years:

"So the Will heaves through Space, and moulds the times,
With mortals for Its fingers! We shall see
Again men's passions, virtues, visions, crimes,
Obey resistlessly
The purposive, unmotived, dominant Thing
Which sways in brooding dark their wayfaring!"

The Spirit of the Pities thus comments upon the distraught mind of the King of England:

"The tears that lie about this plightful scene
Of heavy travail in a suffering soul,
Mocked with the forms and feints of royalty
While scarified by briery Circumstance,
Might drive Compassion past her patiency
To hold that some mean, monstrous ironism
Had built this mistimed fabric of the Spheres
To watch the throbbings of its captive lives,
(The which may Truth forfend) and not thy said
Unmaliced, unimpassioned, nescient Will!"

And the same subject evokes this interchange:

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES.

"Something within me aches to pray
To some Great Heart, to take away
This evil day, this evil day!

CHORUS IRONIC.

"Ha-ha! That's good. He'll pray to It:—
But where does Its compassion sit?
Yea, where abides the heart of It?

"Is it where sky-fires flame and flit,
Or solar craters spew and spit,
Or ultra-stellar night-webs knit?

"What is Its shape? Man's counterfeit?
That turns in some far sphere unlit
The Wheel which drives the Infinite?

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES.

"Mock on, mock on! Yet I'll go pray
To some Great Heart, who haply may
Charm mortal miseries away!"

It requires a superhuman degree of fortitude to accept this view of the mystery of life, yet no other seems vouchsafed to the inquiring eye of our poet, and he makes us feel, while under the spell of his imaginative vision, as if all others were but tricks of our self-delusion. To descend from great matters to small, we must mention that a wrong accentuation of the name Románoff has spoiled several verses of the drama.

ATLANTIC MONTHLY
FEB. 1906.

Although Hardy's very latest work is of an importance to demand separate and lengthy appreciation,—as well sum up in a paragraph the second part of *Faust* and a few Greek tragedies,—no study of his novels is complete without at least a reference to *The Dynasts* (Part One, 1904, Part Two, 1906).

This inchoate and disturbing production contains his garnered observation upon the whole of life, no less! It is his final comment, recorded with a scrupulous love of truth which rejects anything so empirical as a conclusion.

In fact, so far from arriving anywhere, *The Dynasts* gains its chief interest from unraveling the strands which go to make up the dual nature of Thomas Hardy. Aiming at complete freedom from the restrictions of form, he casts it in the shape of a huge panoramic drama of Europe under Napoleon. This immense field is commented upon from middle air by a spirit chorus, each member of which personifies an unchanging point of view. Whatever the practical defects of this form, or lack of form, it at least has the merit of giving elbow room. The author swings individuals, armies, nations, with complete disregard of any limit. His saturation with his period, in feeling and detail, is so thorough as to give *The Dynasts* weight as a mere historical summary, a tracing of motive and design by a hand strong enough to grasp the situation at its largest.

Beyond this, his spirit chorus continues an ever baffled attempt "to prove there is any rhyme or reason in the Universe." At times the lines are full of a sonorous beauty, with a sweep which makes the same demand upon the attention as the long phrasing of modern music. The Spirit of the Pities forever deplores the cruelty and sadness of life. The Spirit Sinister frankly exults in mischief. The Spirit of Irony impersonally comments; the Spirit of Years counsels tolerance.

Indeed, if these debates fail to contain a satisfactory theory of the universe, they do afford a key to the apparent inconsistencies of Thomas Hardy. While all his reasonings sooner or later abut upon an "unmaliced, unimpassioned, nescient Will," something deeper than reason forever denies so chill and meaningless a law of existence. He is like those biologists who, having pushed research to the remotest forms, are still bound to confess that just beyond there lies something which they can neither explain nor ignore.

Re-read in the light of *The Dynasts*, every one of Hardy's novels represents a phase of mental struggle. Hardy has the mind of an ironic pessimist. Taken from this angle, almost every book is an invective against the wanton cruelty of "The Immanent Will." If this were all, we should merely have an arraignment of the entire scheme of creation. But in this lifelong debate, the intellect is constantly opposed by an instinct which steadily rejects a philosophy of logical despair.

As was wisely said of Anatole France, his intellectual irony would finally grow unbearable, if it were not for his sentient, human heart. Different as they are in every other respect, Hardy and Anatole France have this in common. Each in his way views the spectacle with an inward vibration which irrationally persists, and in consequence of which each is saddened but unembittered by the worst that life can show.

And in the end, as emotion must always prevail over reason, as love is eternally constructive, to the great gain of Hardy's readers, the discouragement wrought by his pitiless logic is forever canceled by his indestructible human sympathy.

A GIGANTIC SERIAL.

"The Dynasts." By Thomas Hardy. Part II. 4s. 6d. net. Macmillan and Co.

Feelings distinctly mixed, with admiration overtopping all, are evoked by the second instalment of Mr. Thomas Hardy's monstrous Napoleonic drama in blank verse, varied by occasional lyrics and prose. It is such a large and magnificent conception, the purpose is fulfilled with so considerable a measure of success, the sense of dramatic tragedy is so well sustained, the work itself is so remarkably unequal, and there is, after all, so keen a sense of wasted effort. The magnitude of the whole design has a splendour of audacity that attracts in itself—this second part takes us from the last days of Fox to the last hours of George III., has six acts, forty-three scenes, countless mortal characters, and eleven immortal "phantom intelligences"—and there is something Napoleonic in its scope as there is something Homeric in its form. But then there are lapses into sheer banality of verse, sheer vulgarity of comic relief in prose that go far in marring the sense of really great achievement. Mr. Hardy has aimed very high, and it may with justice be said that he has come very near his aim.

It is a kaleidoscope of some of the most fateful years of history, dominated on the stage by the one great figure of a ruthless Napoleon, in the "flies" (if the expression may be permitted) by the hovering spectre of inviolable Will. Battles, courts, spoils, stratagems, the action of princes and potentates, of common soldiers and humble citizens—all are spread vividly before us in a series of seemingly inchoate and disjointed dissolving views—snapshots of Europe in travail But so vivid is the imaginative force of the author's mind that the sequence of events does not seem to be broken, and we here read history as drama with a revelation of its inner force and meaning. By the employment of the supernatural agents, the spirits of the years, of the pities, etc., an effect of resistless tragedy is secured that is comparable to Greek tragedy itself. If the philosophy is terrible in its pessimism, the imaginative power is undeniable. By these means the sense of doom is conveyed, and what must otherwise have remained fragmentary visions are given the coherence and direction of life itself. These "phantom intelligences" act as chorus to the tragedy of Napoleon's "star" (Mr. Hardy evidently accepts the "man of destiny" theory as an explanation of the Napoleonic era and drama), and are not the least noteworthy part of a remarkable experiment.

This is, in fine, a great achievement. Since Homer and Milton Iliads and epics have been abandoned in despair or disgust. Mr. Hardy has attempted a new Iliad, another "Paradise Lost," in a fresh setting and an unconventional garb. His work will live for this generation—for the few amongst them; it will probably be forgotten by the next, whilst the mere novels have their tale of readers.

It is perhaps by the stage directions, in which the movements of battles are described, by their direct and forcible simplicity, that the sense of drama is kept most constantly alive. But, at his best, Mr. Hardy writes noble blank verse, entirely in the Elizabethan tradition. Take, as an instance, a speech of Prince Hohenloe's on the field of Jena:—

> That means the Duke of Brunswick, I conceive,
> Impacting on the enemy's further force
> Led by, they say, Davout and Bernadotte . . .
> God grant his star less lurid rays than ours,
> Or this too pregnant, hoarsely groaning day
> Shall, ere its loud delivery be done,
> Have twinned disasters to the fatherland
> That fifty years will fail to sepulchre!

The more pity it is that, and not infrequently, the verse should descend to a prosaic and rough banality, only matched by the coarse colloquialism that obtrudes in some of the remarks made by supers in this great drama. In the same way some of the lyrical passages are quite unworthy of theme or author, whilst others can be admired without reserve. The best perhaps is the chorus of the pities, watching the crucial issue of the fight at Albuera.

> SEMICHORUS I OF THE PITIES (aerial music).
> They come, beset by riddling hail;
> They sway like sedges in a gale;
> They fail, and win, and win, and fail. Albuera!
>
> SEMICHORUS II.
> They gain the ground there, yard by yard,
> Their brows and hair and lashes charred,
> Their blackened teeth set firm and hard.
>
> SEMICHORUS I.
> Their mad assailants rave and reel,
> And face, as men who scorn to feel,
> The close-lined, three-edged prongs of steel.
>
> SEMICHORUS II.
> Till faintness follows closing-in,
> When, faltering headlong down, they spin
> Like leaves. But those pay well who win Albuera.

A fine work on the whole, and not unworthy of the impossibly large plan to fit an impossibly large theme.

Evening Standard
Feb 12. 1906

Daily Graphic
Feb 9. 1906

MR. HARDY'S "DYNASTS."

["The Dynasts. A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars." By Thomas Hardy. Part Second. (Macmillan and Co.) 4s. 6d. net.]

(Published To-day.)

There are many occasions when criticism finds itself hard pressed to keep its balance; but no dilemma of the critic is more difficult than that presented by the spectacle of an author, highly distinguished and acclaimed in one field of literature, suddenly yielding to an unfortunate impulse and wasting his genuine genius upon an uncongenial field. The memory of past successes and gratitude for many enjoyments insists upon a respectful hearing of the new departure, but common candour and honesty demand a regretful protest. To flatter a great man's weaknesses is to do a rank disservice to his powers.

Some such dilemma as this, and some such obligation for a respectful protest, seem to beset the honest reviewer of Mr. Thomas Hardy's "Dynasts." It is no good making idle pretences about the matter; the whole thing is a mistake. The very title-page has its own unconscious humour—"A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars in Three Parts, Nineteen Acts, and One Hundred and Thirty Scenes"—could anything promise a less dramatic atmosphere? But Mr. Hardy's machinery is even more cumbrous than his story. The elaborate history of the Napoleonic campaigns is given, through the long series of a hundred and thirty scenes, to the accompaniment of chorus and semi-chorus, displaying the Comments of the Years, the judgments of the Recording Angels, the sympathy of the Spirits of Irony and Pity, and other literary appendages of full burden, under the weight of which the dramatic interest is slowly but surely bowed down and overpowered. What is one to say of such a costly and magnificent failure? That the blank verse contains fine passages is a foregone conclusion from the moment that Mr. Hardy's name is read upon the title-page; that the dramatic conduct of the play issues at times in flashes of the true genius of characterisation is equally inevitable; but between these flashes there are interminable tracts of historical dialogue which seem to drive the writer perforce into the composition of dull and ponderous verse.

> To recapitulate. Nothing can gratify you
> Like this alliance. Providence has flung
> My good friend Sultan Selim from his throne,
> Leaving me free in dealings with the Porte;
> And I discern this hour as one to end
> A rule that Time no longer lets cohere.
> If I abstain, its spoils will go to swell
> The power of this same England, our enemy—
> That country which monopolizes the trade of towns
> With such bold rebellion to monopolies,
> Among the rest, the whole of Peninsula's.

Can anyone pretend that the pen which wrote "Tess of the Durbeyvilles" is profitably employed upon such turgid oratory as this? Or, if we turn to the choruses, what can one find of lyric beauty or feeling in a running commentary of this kind, which is attributed to the Recording Angels?

> The Spanish King has bowed unto the Fate
> Which bade him abdicate,
> The sensual Queen, whose passionate caprice
> Has held her chambering with "the Prince of Peace,"
> And wrought the Bourbons' fall,
> Holds to her Love in all;
> And Bonaparte has ruled that his and he
> Henceforth displace the Bourbon dynasty.

Be it said with all respect, the prospect of such a recital on the part of the Recording Angel adds a new terror to the Day of Judgment!

No; it is useless to make pretences for the sake of old associations. "The Dynasts" is a mistake both in idea and execution. The very possibility of its conception shows the grasp and vigour of Mr. Hardy's intellect to be unimpaired, and all his truest admirers will look forward to the time when the publication of the Third Part shall set him free to employ that active and nervous intellect once more in the fields which it has made its own. We long, like Pym, in "Strafford," to walk the meadows of our youth with him again, to linger on the Dorset hillside with his woodlanders. Their true and rustic dialect has a charm which somehow or other seems to evade the imitative observation of the Recording Angels.

Black and White
Feb 24. 1906

The Dynasts—his "panoramic show," as he calls it, of the incidents of the Napoleonic Wars, from the camping at Boulogne until the battle of Waterloo—is unquestionably great in its design and curiously fascinating in its execution. The second of the three parts of *The Dynasts* has just been issued. Like the first part of the drama, it contains innumerable scenes laid in every part of Europe, and innumerable characters of every degree, from emperors down to camp-followers. As in the first part, the gorgeous procession of men and women from life to death "looks no more than a file of ants crawling along a strip of garden matting." It is not, indeed, as an historical pageant-play that *The Dynasts* is primarily interesting. Its dramatic qualities are quite different from those which we find even in the most loosely-constructed historical play of Shakespeare's. *The Dynasts* interests us chiefly as a revelation of the spiritual attitude of Mr. Hardy to the universe. In it he has retold the first part of *Gulliver's Travels* as a tragedy, in which Europe is Lilliput and God or destiny is a blindly destructive, unconscious Gulliver. Whatever the faults of the drama, we must admit that by his passionate pitifulness (held by his irony in splendid restraint) we are compelled, as we go from scene to scene, to suspend our disbelief in any scheme of things other than that which the imagination of Mr. Hardy has conceived. If we consider *The Dynasts* as a chronicle play, on the other hand, we are bound to confess that Mr. Hardy does not always overcome an artistic scepticism.

One might go on in this way to find fault after fault. In the end, however, one does not remember the faults too earnestly. One remembers only that one has been transported from land to land, like a wiser Faustus, and been intoxicated, if not with fresh knowledge, at least with strange and desirable moods. One has experienced the joys of companionship with a great spirit.

The Guardian
March 14-1906.

REVIEWS.

A DRAMA OF NATIONS.

THE DYNASTS: A DRAMA OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS. In Three Parts, Nineteen Acts, and 137 Scenes. By THOMAS HARDY. Part II. Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.

England and Europe have waited patiently during the greater part of a century for their Napoleonic epic. Scott and Southey tried their hands at isolated portions of it without achieving the success one might have hoped for; the minor poets who essayed to sing the glories of Trafalgar and Waterloo are clean forgotten. Two years ago Mr. Hardy gave us the first part of the dramatic poem in which he dealt powerfully and picturesquely with the events of the Great War down to Trafalgar and Austerlitz. For obvious reasons it was appropriate that the creation (turn over)

* Mr. Costelloe's evidence; question 20,330, Vol. II. of Evidence.
† Taxation of Ground Values. By Dr. William Smart. P. 97.
‡ Bailie Ferguson. Vol. III. of the Evidence, question 10,000.

of the Napoleonic epic should have been undertaken by a writer whose very name conjures up visions of the stirring days when Thomas Hardy, "Nelson's Captain," listened to the last words of his dying chief in the cockpit of the *Victory*, while his brother Joseph tended the beacon-fire on Blagdon-hill, far away in distant Dorset. Hitherto the most ardent admirers of Mr. Hardy as a novelist have declined to accept his *magnum opus* as serious. They stand aghast at the very immensity of its conception, and ask plaintively for more pictures of Wessex men, women, manners, and scenery as soon as this Napoleonic nightmare which vexes their souls shall have come to an end. They call the drama "amorphous," "unequal," "ponderous," "unnatural," "unwieldy," and so forth. Indeed, they would heartily rejoice if the writer could be persuaded to forego once and for all the promised third part, which will take us to Waterloo and St. Helena.

While we are hardly prepared to claim that "The Dynasts" is the finest dramatic poem in English literature, it is unquestionably an exceedingly remarkable and powerful piece of work, as full of ideality as it is of storm and stress, and it is impossible not to delight in the consummate artistic skill with which the poet has treated the most striking episodes of the Great War. Once it is understood that the drama he unfolds is "unactable on any stage," and is so regarded by the writer, it will not be difficult to realise the advantages of the form in which Mr. Hardy has so deftly cast the story he has to tell. If he startles the reader at first sight with the number of his *dramatis personae*, real and supernatural, and the lightning rapidity of his changes of scene from German and Spanish battlefields to Paris boudoirs and from St. Petersburg to Corunna, he contrives to compress into a small octavo volume of just 300 pages a narrative of all the great events which happened in Europe between the battle of Jena and the early summer of 1811, when the Prince Regent and his friends celebrated the victory of Albuera by a banquet at Carlton House. This period includes the divorce of Josephine, the Emperor's marriage with Marie Louise, the birth of the King of Rome, the battles of Eylau and Wagram, and all the first portion of the Peninsular War. Some of Mr. Hardy's most attractive lines and richest imagery fall to the lot of the "Phantom Intelligences," "The Spirit of the Pities," "The Spirits Sinister and Ironic," "The Spirit of Rumour," and their respective choruses, who aid so materially and effectively the progressive development of the six acts and forty-three scenes which constitute this second part of "The Dynasts." As in his novels, so in both the poetic and prose portions of his drama, the author never hesitates to call a spade a spade. Mrs. Fitzherbert—of whose wrongs much has been heard lately—plays an important part in more than one act. She is first seen in the reception-room of Lady Salisbury, to which we are transported by a dextrous stroke of the pen from a room in the palace of Godoy, "Prince of the Peace," at Aranjuez. A deputation of Spanish patriots is introduced to the Prince-Regent and Mrs. Fitzherbert—a situation which gives Mr. Hardy obvious opportunities for playful irony. Soon he returns to sterner themes, and the following lines are a good example of his powers as a painter of battle scenes:—

"Snows incarnadined were thine, O Eylau, field of the wide white spaces
And frozen lakes, and frozen limbs, and blood iced hard as it left the veins;
Steel-cased squadrons, swathed in cloud-drift, plunging to doom through pathless places,
And forty thousand dead and near dead, strewing the early nighted plains.
Friedland to these adds its tale of victims, its midnight marches and hot collisions,
Its plunge, at his word, on the enemy cooped by the bended river and famed Mill Stream,
As he shatters the move of the loose-knit nations, to curb his exploitful soul's ambitions,
And their great Confederacy dissolves like the diorama of a dream."

In a different vein is Josephine's appeal to her husband while discussing the question of divorce and re-marriage in her boudoir at St. Cloud:—

"And why this craze for lineal manikins
Made of mere graveyard flesh? You have said yourself
It mattered not—Great Cæsar, you declared,
Sank sonless to his rest; was greater deemed
Even for the isolation. Frederick
Saw, too, no heir.
. . . . . .
O my husband long,
Will you not purge your soul to value best
That high heredity from brain to brain
Which supersedes mere sequences of blood,
That often vary more from sire to son
Than between furthest strangers?
Napoléon's offspring in his like must lie;
The second of his line be he who shows
Napoléon's soul in later bodiment,
The household father happening as he may!"

In the first part of "The Dynasts" more than one scene was laid in Wessex. In the second part no mention is made of "dear Dorset." The soldiers who fought well and drank hard in the Peninsula hailed apparently from some sister shire. We hear now and again of "old Bristol," College Green and "Bristol Milk." At Corunna the poet finds one more opportunity, and portions of the Burial Service are used most impressively in depicting the laying to his rest of the dead general. Darkness falls on Talavera, and the Chorus of Pities sings:—

"Thus the dim nocturnal voice of the conflict
Closes with the receding roar of the gun-fire.
Harness loosened then, and their day-long strenuous
Strain unbending,
Worn-out lines lie down where they late stood—staunchly—
Cloaks around them rolled—by the bivouac embers,
There to pursue at dawn the dynasts' death-game
Unto the ending."

The "Good King" who discussed the naval outlook with Thomas Hardy, the sailor, in 1805 is now (1811) a helpless and harmless imbecile, surrounded by doctors who believe bleeding to be the only panacea for his mental affliction. They tell him of the victory won "hard by Albuera—far in harried Spain," a triumph of "dash unmatched and feats unparalleled." Quoth King George:—

"He says I have won a battle? Glut I thought
I was a poor afflicted captive here,
In darkness lingering out my lonely days
Beset with terror of these myrmidons
That suck my blood like vampires!"

The curtain descends on the ill-timed gaieties of Carlton House. Here Mr. Hardy's humour finds full play in elaborating the idea of the residences of the Princess of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert having transparent walls, and the two ladies going in disguise to witness the festivities as unbidden guests:—

"With dames of strange repute, who bear a ticket
For screened admission by the private wicket."

The Spirit of Rumour says:—

"I see within the first his latter wife,
That Caroline of Brunswick, whose brave sire
Yielded his breath on Jena's reeking plain,
And of whose kindred other yet may fall
Ere long; if character indeed be fate—
She idles feasting, and is full of jest
As each gay chariot rumbles to the rout.
'I rank like your Archbishops' wives,' laughs she;
Denied my husband's honours. Funny me.'"

The rioting is over. Carlton House is wrapped in silence, and the Chorus of the Years sings:—

"No less than regal puppet-shows,
The rapt Determinator throes
That neither good nor evil knows."

"The Dynasts" is a monument of true poetic feeling and deep study of human nature. Mr. Hardy is not a man to be either hurried or harried. He will, at his leisure and in the way he deems best, complete the Napoleonic epic which the nineteenth century failed to bequeath to those that came after. It is a debt which he owes, not only to the men of Wessex, of whom for many years he has been the foremost historiographer, but to his fellow-countrymen of the Saxon race on both sides of the Atlantic.

Manchester Guardian
Feb 23 1906

"THE DYNASTS." (PART II.)

There is something fine and stimulating even in the rashness of adventure of Mr. Hardy's break from the habits of work that have given him his place among English novelists. He was never a writer of narrow scope, and he had shown no signs of exhaustion. To say that this excursion was worth making might seem to qualify the estimate of his great series of novels, for a work of such magnitude as this must exclude many possibilities. Some of those who have been impressed by "The Dynasts" will not find in it, nor could they find in Mr. Hardy's remarkable shorter poems, the essential work of his life, but a full and coherent life may find stimulant or recreation in parentheses, and Mr. Hardy is the guardian of his own genius. We may acquiesce, and though any expressed intention to forsake novel writing might prejudice us against "The Dynasts," it would be unfortunate if this original, absorbing, grandiose work should remain incomplete. Readers of the first part will remember that there is an attempt at something of wider scope than the novel or drama that gives typical expression to the human struggle. Here we see the great movements of the period of the Napoleonic wars, and the vast conception requires a chorus of "phantom intelligences," the imaginative embodiment of tendencies or moods that belong to a world which stumbles blindly towards its destiny. These brooding spirits, which may arouse in us dim prepossessions of the supernatural, and Mr. Hardy's skill in reproducing something of the form and pressure of the time give a curious sense of a drama played by phantoms on a gigantic phantom stage. The stage directions are imaginative hints, and from great altitudes we look down upon crawling armies, couriers flitting from city to city, the progress on foot, on horseback, or in phantom coaches of half-familiar spectres which, when we approach them, lapse curiously into speech almost colloquial. Mr. Hardy has suggested that the drama of the future may be for "mental performance" only, and his extraordinary convention is not, at least, disconcerting to the imagination. Sometimes his bird's-eye views and the comments of these spirits, which, whether benignant or sinister, are always futile, suggest the contraction rather than the expansion of the mental view, but at least he dispenses with the traditional stage performance in which some dozen shaky actors represent an army and are huddled into the wings to make way for the opposing ghost.

Napoleon is a brutal, restless figure, effectively if not greatly designed, but Mr. Hardy's characters hardly have the breath of life in them. This Napoleon does not drag up his soul for our inspection as might a Napoleon conceived by Mr. Davidson, and generally the indications of great movements are more impressive than the human interests. One is reminded sometimes of Whitman's attempts to fill our minds, but Mr. Hardy does not resort to cataloguing. He has written a history in his own way, and in this new handling of the theme he has professedly attempted to give England the just share denied to her by some historians. "The Dynasts" is, on the whole, a historical pageant, and if it is a pageant of bleeding hearts, there is not, as in Mr. Hardy's greater works, the high agitation of the soul. The myriad characters, speaking and mute, are skilfully marshalled, and the variety of diction avoids monotony. Prose is frequently employed, but verse is the natural vehicle for anything above a certain medium of emotional or rhetorical pressure. Sometimes we are a little puzzled, as in the opening prose passages, when Fox speaks colloquially and the servant replies with a curious affectation which might indicate some unexplored intention of comedy. Perhaps the exigencies of the design, which is a great matter to keep in hand, have distracted Mr. Hardy occasionally from the poetry of his theme, but he gives us few dull moments. His blank verse is a good instrument, and it rises eloquently on occasion to fine significance, while there is not anywhere a pedantic elegance of phrase. Mr. Hardy succeeds in impressing upon us something of his own sense of the impending and terrific. His work must be judged in its entirety, but it is at least a remarkable and individual performance.

* THE DYNASTS. A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars, in three parts, nineteen acts, and 130 scenes. By Thomas Hardy. Part II. London: Macmillan and Co. Pp. x. 302. 4s. 6d. net.

LITERATURE.

CAUSERIE OF THE WEEK.

WHERE IGNORANT ARMIES CLASH BY NIGHT.

I HAVE been honoured by my friend the editor with the commission to write the "literary causerie" for the week, on the subject of the second part of Mr. Hardy's *Dynasts*.* Now, a "literary causerie" suggests something chatty and comfortable on some nice, warm, old-fashioned theme like Charles Lamb, or the Elizabethans, or the last minor poet. But *The Dynasts* puts the critic face to face with the living problem of a new form of art, a new method of historical presentment, withal so exactly suited to the mood of our age, that we are sure to see in the literature of the coming century many partial adaptations both of its form and of its spirit. It is seed in the soil. In its influence on other writers it may surpass not only the ninety-and-nine "imitative" books of the year, but also the great "inimitable" individualists like Browning, Carlyle, or Mr. Meredith. The critic, therefore, cannot "chat" comfortably about *The Dynasts*, any more than Mr. Birrell can chat about the Education Bill.

But I must be allowed to make one remark in the "causerie" vein. It is very nice of our veteran novelists to write poems about Napoleon in their declining years; but why will they always call him *Napoléon?* By God's grace we beat him at Waterloo, and took him at sea, and kept him at St. Helena, and have therefore as good a right of conquest to call him plain English Napōleon, as we have to pronounce "Cressy" and "Agingcaught," and the "Armaida." But if the right of conquest be dismissed as fanciful, there is a better reason. The phenomenon which we English call Napoleon, is one of the dozen great things in the world; he is so great that he belongs first to all mankind, and only secondly to the Latin races. He is like the sea, or Julius Cæsar, or the Pope. He is so constantly on all tongues that he has a right to a different name in every great language of the earth.

And, further, the English word Napoleon happens to be a very much finer sounding word than the French Napoléon. In pronouncing the French, we may not linger on the second syllable long enough to give it the grand reverberation of battle.

> "Cannon his name,
> Cannon his voice, he came."

Yes, in English it is cannon—Napo-o-oleon. But in French it is mere musketry popping—Nap-o-lé-on. (The Italian *Napoleone* is good, for the fourth syllable can be grandly stressed.) Two of the finest words in the English language are Napoleon and Isaiah: long may they reverberate among us—the one like the boom of cannon, the other like the prophet's cry over the desert hills.

The Dynasts is an historical play in three parts of six acts each. This second part deals with the years 1806-10. I will for the present defer speaking of the technical innovations which make this drama so remarkable in the history of literature. Let us consider first his poetical attitude towards the events which he narrates. He shows a most vivid poetical grasp of the geographical picturesque in relation to history; that, I think, is the most original merit of *The Dynasts*, and I shall speak of it below *à propos* of his stage-directions. Next, he has an infinite pity for the little life of man, so sickly struggling, so soon and often so cruelly crushed out, so quickly moved to tenderness, to wrath, to baseness, to self-sacrifice—a feeling of pity very much akin to that of Carlyle in his more humane mood. It is this feeling that inspired Mr. Hardy's two greatest poems—*The Souls of the Slain* (in Poems of the Past and Present) and *The Tramp Woman's Tragedy* (*North American Review*, November, 1903). Indeed, the Napoleonic period no doubt commended itself to the author of *Tess*, not only because of its peculiar adaptability to picturesque geographic treatment but also because of the range it affords for sheer human pity. (He has not yet treated the horrible Franco-Spanish side of the Peninsular War. Perhaps he will treat it in the third part, and if he does so, let him first drink deep of fathomless woe, by looking, if he can bear to look, on Goya's *Los Desastres de la Guerra*.)

And yet there is another element in the period, well fitted for poetic treatment, which Mr. Hardy has omitted. He detects no subterraneous growth towards better things, in the Napoleonic epoch—he sees only cosmopolitan massacre, organised apparently for no end save the ambitions of little "Dynasts," Corsican Hapsburg and other, but really at the haphazard dictate of the "Immannet Will," "The purposive, unmotived, dominant Thing," the non-moral God whom this poet believes to rule the universe blindfold.

> "*Spirit of the Pities.*
> "Something within me aches to pray
> To some great Heart, to take away
> This evil day, this evil day!
>
> "*Chorus Ironic.*
> "Ha-ha! That's good. He'll pray to It:—
> But where do It's compassions sit?
> Yea, where abides the heart of It?
>
> "Is it where sky-fires flame and flit,
> Or solar craters spew and spit,
> Or ultra-stellar night-webs knit?" (p. 276.)

Now, without entering into the sphere of philosophy, it is at least fair to point out that the history of the Napoleonic period did really mean something for poor humanity, in spite of Napoleon and the other "Dynasts." It broke up the *ancien régime*, so that after Waterloo all the king's horses and all the king's men—(the nursery rhyme is somewhat musty). It founded the German and Italian nations. It made room for the new industrial world to grow, by sweeping away the feudal and clerical. It was the witches' cauldron of the bubbling hell-broth, out of which rose the child with the cap of liberty on its head and the engine and book in its hands—the nineteenth century. Now we cannot expect Mr. Hardy to adopt an optimistic philosophy, but he might see that historically the Napoleonic period did *happen* (let us say) to mean something for the descendants of the wretched millions which it slew. And this is a fine theme for poetry. Mr. Hardy, in his pessimistic preoccupation, seems to have missed it. He very properly likes low life (one of his best scenes is in a Spanish cellar during Moore's retreat to Corunna)—why did not he then give us the English Radicals, or the Napoleonic reforms working in Italy or Germany

*The Dynasts: A Drama. By Thomas Hardy. Part II. London: Macmillan and Co. 1906.

(say a scene in the house of Mazzini's father!) There is too much in this second part about mere Dynasts. Dynasts are, indeed, the human counterparts of his "purposive, unmotived, dominant Thing" (Cobbett called them "The Thing")—but the people were, during this period, preparing to be no longer the sheep to these blind shepherds. The great industrial revolution was going on in England. Better than any living writer Mr. Hardy could have given us, in one short scene, the pathos, the nobility, the tenderness, the horror of a starving weaver's home—or of the factory children—the weaving of England's war taxes, and the weaving also of the new world, of the English urban democracy which is in our day coming to its own. *The Dynasts* is too much a drum and trumpet history, none the less because it gives a full share to the wails of the wounded.

Of course, I do not mean that Mr. Hardy is bound to treat of things which he does not feel. But other poets when they write of the Napoleonic period in prose and verse would do well to join to Mr. Hardy's geographical picturesqueness and human pity (if, indeed, they can attain to that), a perception that there was something much greater than battles and treaties going on all the time, that the first chords of a great new music might have been heard through all the Napoleonic roar in Europe—the birth, in England, of industrial democracy, in Europe of nationality and the desire for freedom. These things are not apparent to the Dynasts, but they would certainly be apparent to the supernatural spectators of the drama if those spectators were not pessimistically prejudiced.

In the first part of *The Dynasts* this lack of deeper historical interest was not felt, because the sea-story of Nelson and Villeneuve and the counterpoise of Austerlitz filled the heart and imagination throughout, and led up to a grand dramatic climax. But in part two Wagram is an anti-climax after Austerlitz, and Talavera after Trafalgar: *The Dynasts* cease to suffice us, and we look round in vain for the peoples, who are only shown to us in the capacity of victims.

I find that I have left myself but little space for considering the technical innovations introduced by Mr. Hardy into the artistic presentment of history. Yet this is the most original part of his work, and the part likely hereafter to bear most fruit in the writings of other men. A problem which will become more pressing as the centuries go by, is what to do with the ever increasing bulk of historical knowledge. It must be illuminated by the imagination. But in what form? The answer is, in a thousand different forms, graduating in freedom of treatment from the scientific monograph up to this form invented by Mr. Hardy, perhaps the freest possible where the narrative form is retained at all. Fortunately Mr. Hardy has not held himself free from the historical duty of knowing his authorities, or he would have failed in his attempt to present "la chose vue." He possesses the true vision that grows only out of knowledge fructified by imagination. But within the limits set by real knowledge of the events, his freedom of presentment is the widest possible.

His first object, in which he has succeeded as no former writer has done in any form of literature, is to stir up the mingled feeling of curiosity, romance, pity, amusement, and healthy excitement which comes to us whenever we thoroughly realise what very different scenes are enacted on the earth's surface, at the same hour, and sometimes even as the cause or result of the same events. It may be called "the historical thrill." Historians often feel it, but have seldom the means to convey it to others. Carlyle conveyed it by dint of poetic genius. Mr. Hardy conveys it by high poetic talent and a machinery ingeniously constructed for the express purpose. The spectator is carried from scene to scene; now he is with the Dynasts in the Palace, now with the mob under their window, now in the mail coach, now outside the general's tent, now (and this is Mr. Hardy's great method) whisked up into the higher air to survey all the far-shining continents and the isles spread below, or dropping midway to earth to view a battlefield, and see the little columns of red and blue and white ants, with their tiny guns in their tiny hands, creeping towards each other through the olive and cork woods of Talavera, or spraying in rout over the Wagram plateau. He shows us his battles just as we see the model of Waterloo in the United Service Museum in Whitehall (that unique glory of polemographic poetical art which all students of *The Dynasts* should at once visit).

The transition from scene to scene is done very magnificently. It is not the theatre curtain, but the mists, or night itself which descends to cover the scene from the mind's eye. Here is a typical stage-direction (p. 89). He wishes us to pass from a London Ministerial drawing-room to the entry of King Joseph Bonaparte into Madrid. This is how he does it:

> "The reception-chamber [in London] is shut over by the night without, and the point of view rapidly recedes south, London, and its streets and lights, diminishing till they are lost in the distance, and its noise being succeeded by the babble of the Channel waves.
>
> "Scene IV.
>
> "Madrid and its Environs.
>
> "The view is from the housetops of the city. . . . . The sunburnt roofs, warm ochreous walls, and blue shadows of the capital, wear their usual aspect except for a few feeble attempts at decoration."

"The babble of the Channel waves" is good. And since Nelson (or rather in this second part Nelson's invisible, ubiquitous ghost) is the real hero of Mr. Hardy's Napoleonic drama, "the babble of waves" has historical as well as geographic significance. It is in such touches that this play excels.

A *flaire* for the geographic picturesque in relation to history is the unfailing joy and resource of the traveller or the student who is lucky enough to possess it, whenever he climbs a hill or reads a history book. It is the great merit of *The Dynasts* to cultivate that sense in us all. Even his chorus of supernatural beings, who will be judged differently according as we estimate the value of the sentiments they utter and the literary quality of the verse in which they express themselves—even the "chorus of the years" is best when it is most geographical. Thus the *finale* of the last act, on the eve of the invasion of Russia, is perhaps the finest poem in the book:

> "Why watch we here? Look all around
> Where Europe spreads her crinkled ground,
> From Osmanlee to Hekla's mound,
> Look all around!
> Hark at the wind-combed Ural pines;
> See how each, pendulum-wise, inclines;
> Mark the clouds' labyrinthine lines;
> Behold the tumbling Biscay Bay;
> The midland main in silent sway;
> As urged to move them, so move they.
> No less through regal puppet-shows
> The rapt Determinator throes,
> That neither good nor evil knows!"

To which the Chorus of Pities replies as best it may:

> "Yet It may wake and understand
> Ere Earth unshape, know all things, and
> With knowledge use a painless hand,
> A Painless hand!"

The philosophy may be open to dispute, but the geography is not.

G. M. Trevelyan.

Daily Chronicle
Feb 12. 1906

MR. HARDY'S DRAMA.

The Great Novelist as a Poet and Playwright.

THE DYNASTS, a Drama of the Napoleonic Wars, in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes, by Thomas Hardy: Part II. London, Macmillan, 4s. 6d.

By C. Lewis Hind.

Mr. Hardy will write no more novels. This decision, to which he remains firm, disregardful of blandishments from publishers, is deeply regretted by his public, students of literature, many of whom esteem him the first living master of English prose. In spite of their sombre sadness and passion for rugged truth, his books are stimulating. Their ironic humour invigorates; the philosophic intention behind the story becomes a stone in the edifice of the reader's spiritual development; his men and women, so curiously informed with the personality of the author, so remote yet so real, live. So intimate and comprehensive are his descriptions of Nature that, when I paid my first visit to the Hardy country, the heaths and hills seemed familiar as the scenes of my childhood.

The Return to Poetry.

Mr. Hardy will write no more stories; but his readers are not without consolation. His brain is as keen as ever; his intuitions as acute; his command of words, such right words, remains as firm and far-reaching as his mastery over sentences. In the peace of his home in Dorchester he broods, as of yore, on the undiscoverable ways of the "Willer masked and dumb," and His handling of the chattels that are called men and women.

But Mr. Hardy has changed his method of expression, or rather he has sought out an old love, a first love, and told her that she, although long slighted, still holds his heart. That first love was poetry. Through all the years of his allegiance to prose, it was in poetry that he really desired to express himself, and the Muse-Mother he favoured was Melpomene, rather than Euterpe. While writing novels he allowed himself an occasional intimacy with his Muse. The dates of the poems proclaim that. Now it is to be all poetry, or poetical dramas, such as "The Dynasts," with racy prose passages interwoven.

Style and the Man.

In his verse, as in his prose, Mr. Hardy is entirely himself and original. His poetry is rarely lyrical; no glint of the *joie de vivre* lightens it, although there is humour, mordant and ironic. His themes are carved from solemn, deep things; the thunder-thought rises from gloom, like a storm-cloud in a Ruysdael landscape, pregnant with pity for humanity, struggling beneath the awful sway, blind and heedless, of an Immanent Will. Groping? Yes! Logical? No! Hear him in "The Dynasts," where he makes his Spirit Ironic say:

> "The groping tentativeness of an Immanent Will (as grey old Years describes it) cannot be asked to learn logic at this time of day!"

To which the Spirit Sinister answers:

> "Come, Sprite, don't carry your ironies too far, or you may wake up the Unconscious Itself, and tempt It to let all the clockwork of the show run down to spite us."

Mr. Hardy's verse refuses to be forgotten, and often it haunts the reader. His effects are not gained by biting into his theme as with an acid, but by his power to vivify a psychological aspect of his subject that has stirred his imagination. Sometimes he simply states his story in dark lines, leaving the moral to the winds, as in "A Tramp Woman's Tragedy" that appeared in a recent number of the "Atlantic Monthly." This is a novel in a few pages ending, as was inevitable, in disaster. Yet it does not depress, because the truth has been simply told. Like all true poets, he distils beauty from tragedy. There must be many to whom the horror of the Boer war is almost condoned by the mental picture given in his poem called "The Souls of the Slain," that vision of the dead "sprites without mould," rushing home, eager with questions. And the astonishing reply they receive. Is it not most natural?

The Vital Spark.

The poet sees the particular in the general, and makes it vital. In a poem that appeared the other day in the "Spectator," called "The Ejected Member's Wife," Mr. Hardy picked an incident from the unwieldy history of the General Election, moulded it into his strange, unpoetical verse, and that incident, the wave of a hand, became, for some readers, the core of the election. It was merely a heart-cry, and began so simply:

> We shall see her no more
> On that balcony.

Many of the poems have this arresting baldness, the one called "She, to Him," for example, which opens: "I will be faithful to thee; aye, I will."

But I am supposed to be writing of "The Dynasts," not of Mr. Hardy's poems. "The Dynasts" is a work, colossally designed, and dealing with a stupendous theme—the clash of peoples that resulted from the world-shaking career of Napoleon. The first volume, published in 1904, began with England's alarm at the marshalling of Napoleon's army of invasion at Boulogne in 1805, and ended with the death of Pitt. The second volume, just published, opens with a scene in Fox's lodgings in Arlington-street just before his death, and closes with a gathering in Carlton House. The news of Torres Vedras has been dropped into the mad brain of George III., pathetic figure! and the Prince Regent, who has been already disturbed by the appearance of the Princess of Wales and Mrs. Fitzherbert at the Carlton House assembly, remarks to Perceval:

> "By Gad, sir, I shall have a comfortable time of it in my regency, or reign, if what he [the Spirit of the Years, who has whispered the imminence of war into Perceval's ear] foresees be true! But I was born for war; it is my destiny."

The third volume will carry this amazing play "intended simply for mental performance" with its 150 or so "Persons of the Drama" and its chorus of "Phantom Intelligences," to its conclusion—Waterloo.

A drama or chronicle-play designed on these lines cannot reach the level of poems struck out in the heat of emotion. The course of events must be followed, and no author can be interested to the same degree in 150 and odd characters. I find the story itself as interesting as any historical novel: many scenes show all Mr. Hardy's mastery of handling. Well-known historical matters are touched to life with a vividness and characterisation that are denied to many historians. For the first time I have a vivid mental picture of the meeting of Napoleon and Alexander on that upholstered raft in the River Niemen; Godoy, Prince of Peace, a mere name hitherto, becomes a curled and brave voluptuary; Marie Louise, a girl of flesh and blood; the birth of Napoleon's son a realistic domestic event, and the lines of Torres Vedras intelligible. Here is a fragment of dumb show "stage direction":

> As time passes, three reddish-grey streams of marching men loom out to the north, advancing southward along three roads towards three diverse points in the first defence. . . Beside one of the roads two or three of the soldiers are dangling from a tree by the neck, probably for plundering. Dumb Show ends, and the point of view sinks to the earth.

Perhaps the most imaginative scene in the second volume of "The Dynasts" is on a highway in Spain during the retreat of Sir John Moore, where the eye of the spectator is supposed to rake the road from the interior of a cellar which opens upon it. A muddle of deserters, wounded, and dead, lie in the straw, watch the retreat thundering over their heads, and hear the awful voice of Napoleon. In the talk of the deserters, as elsewhere in the volume, we have welcome gleams of the novelist Hardy:

> "Would (cries one of the deserters) that I were at home in England again, where there's old-fashioned tipple and a proper God A'mighty, instead of this eternal 'Oomad and baby; ay, at home a-leaning against old Bristol Bridge, and no questions asked, and the winter sun slanting friendly over Baldwin-street as a' used to do."

"For a Drum was Heard!"

All this section, ending with the burial of Sir John Moore, is fine drama; but in re-reading "The Dynasts" it is the utterances of the Phantom Intelligences, sympathetic, ironic, sinister, pitiful, and the felt presence of the Dumb Cause from which they all date, that chain my attention. It would almost seem as if Mr. Hardy chose the Napoleonic period, the greatest upheaval of modern times, in order to emphasise its pin-spot insignificance in the cosmic ranges of time. All the Phantom Intelligences are interested in the puppets they watch, if the cold, amused indifference of gods can be called interest; but the Spirit of the Pities has human blood in her viewless veins. She approximates to the "Universal Sympathy of human nature—the spectator idealised of the Greek Chorus." And behind all, indifferent as death, looms It.

The Unconscious Itself, the Ancient of Days, is ever present. The first volume begins with this question, asked by the Shade of the Earth: "What of the Immanent Will and Its designs?" While Napoleon is being crowned at Milan the Spirit of the Pities, watching the service, asks what these rich rites mean. To which the Spirit of the Years answers: "A local thing called Christianity . . ." In the description of the battle of Austerlitz this "stage direction" is interjected between two snatches of Semichorus:

> At once, as earlier, a preternatural clearness possesses the atmosphere of the battle-field, in which the scene becomes anatomised and the living masses of humanity transparent. The controlling Immanent Will appears therein, as a brain-like network of currents and ejections, twitching, interpenetrating, entangling, and thrusting hither and thither the human forms.

Lady's Man and Soldier.

When Queen Louisa of Prussia seizes Napoleon's hand, and cries: "Your speeches darn the tearings of your sword!" and asks a woman's question, he answers that the blame rests with his star, his unswerving star, the force which harries him onward, not with himself. At once the Spirit of the Years is perplexed, and cries:

> He spoke thus at the Bridge of Lodi, Savage,
> He's of the few in Europe that discern
> The workings of the Will.

Again, at the Marchioness of Salisbury's, of all places, the Spirit of the Years, after muttering of "The Will that heaves through Space, and moulds the time," ends with a dark allusion to—

> The purposive, unmotived, dominant Thing
> Which sways in brooding dark their wayfaring.

There is abundance for all tastes in this original and remarkable drama—history, tragedy, comedy, humour, and the whispers from eternity of the over-arching, watching Phantom Intelligences.

The historian will find little to cavil at in this chronicle-piece, but the devout may resent Mr. Hardy's stern unbelief, or, shall I call it his larger belief; Christian Scientists will not read "The Dynasts" in their new book-room off Sloane-street; it may startle the timid; but all who appreciate fine, serious work must hail "The Dynasts" as a new thing, and a significant thing in modern literature.

One word more. There is a note of hope even in Mr. Hardy's solemn, stately, and despairful philosophy. It comes from the Chorus of the Years, to the accompaniment of aerial music:

> O heap not blame on that in-brooding Will;
> O pause, till all things all their days fulfil.

The Star 22 Feb. 06

"THE DYNASTS."

When I reviewed the first volume of "The Dynasts" in these columns I expressed doubt as to the form chosen by Mr. Hardy for what the "Times" felicitously calls this "drama of nations." I was afraid that Mr. Hardy would fail to master the subtleties of blank verse, for I recalled the fate of other great prose-writers who in the autumn of their days turned from prose to poetry. Well, after reading the second volume of "The Dynasts" I frankly confess that I was wrong. It is not often that I indolently acquiesce in an accepted opinion without first testing it in my own mind. But this is a busy world, and one has not always time to hammer out one's own views. There is always a strong temptation to go through the gap after the other sheep. Well, I apologise for my laziness in assuming the truth of the popular opinion that a man who writes good prose cannot write good poetry. "The Dynasts" is stuffed full of the very finest poetry. Its form is rough and rude. The blank verse is like no blank verse that was ever written. Mr. Hardy makes blank verse with axe and cleaver, poleaxe and pickaxe. He attacks the words, and fells them into their place with violent blows. But, in spite of the brutality of his versification, his masculine imagination thrills us through and through. Supreme poetic form can live without any emotional or imaginative passion behind it. That is a commonplace. It is not so fully realised that supreme imaginative passion can live without being enshrined in supreme poetic form. I am bound to confess that there is to-day a tendency to overestimate the value of form, and to underestimate the value of imagination. Now Mr. Hardy's "Dynasts" is not formless. It has severe architectonic grandeur in its outlines, and although some of the decorative details of the vast edifice are uncouth and uncomely, the general effect is majestic. In short, "The Dynasts" is a Stonehenge epic, gigantic, sombre, gloomy, mysterious, rather than an Albert Memorial gewgaw. I have never read any drama which appealed so tremendously to the pictorial imagination. The point of view is perpetually changing, but it is always detached from the scene presented, whether it is that of the Spirit of the Pities, the Spirit Ironic, the Spirit of the Years, the Spirit of the Earth, the Chorus and Semichorus, or that of the calm spectator. The swiftly moving scenes and personages are amazingly vivid, and they are shown in a philosophic perspective so sharp that they never become more than puppets dancing as the Immanent Will plucks and pulls the strings that move their passions. Even the titanic figure of Napoleon becomes a petty marionette. The savage irony of the philosophic perspective of the poem, nevertheless, increases its dramatic power, for it contrasts their apparent glory with their real absurdity. Kings and queens, statesmen and generals, peasants and soldiers, are all seen like "a file of ants crawling along a strip of garden-gravel." Napoleon is merely the largest ant. Yet the play has pathos of humanity seen through [illegible] of pessimism [illegible]

Altogether, this volume is so full of Hardyesque qualities that I relinquish my objections to its form. At the same time I wish the preposition "of" in blank verse were abolished. It is the worst form of Chinese slavery.

James Douglas.

THE BOOK OF THE WEEK.

MR. THOMAS HARDY'S PLAY.

THE DYNASTS. A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars, in Three Parts, Nineteen Acts, and One hundred and thirty Scenes. By Thomas Hardy. Part Second. London: Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.

SUSPENSE of judgment or, to phrase it more fittingly, suspense of opinion was, we think, the attitude which commended itself to most people whose opinion on literature is valuable when Mr. Hardy published the first part of *The Dynasts* about two years ago. Mr. Hardy, it went without saying, was an artist whose deliberate judgment might well outweigh the objections of a hundred critics, and the plan upon which *The Dynasts* was built was clearly the outcome of years of preparation and careful thought. It was not only drama on a hitherto unimagined scale, embracing all the kingdoms and all the personalities of Europe at the most confused and heroic moment of her history, but it was drama based on a philosophy from which drama (to our knowledge, at least) had never before been evolved and which seems to many people the very negation of the principles on which great drama is based. If you call to mind any of the great dramas in literature, *Agamemnon*, *Œdipus*, *Othello* or *Macbeth*, you find yourself watching a great soul in conflict with destiny. Human thought and action personified in one man of heroic mould, and the inevitable consequences of human thought and action personified for poetry as Zeus or as Fate or perhaps as some other man—those are the elements of the great dramas that we know, and in their conflict, in the dark borderland of doubt between a deed and its results, in what Aeschylus called the *μεταίχμιον σκότου*, the dusk between opposing spears, lies the essence of dramatic interest and suspense. The hero, be it Agamemnon or Macbeth or whom you will, is responsible for his own deeds, but the deed once done is irrevocable and its consequences will be what they will be. That philosophy runs through all great dramatic literature; in the choruses of the *Agamemnon*, for instance, it finds expression in a thousand phrases of piteous or terrible import.

But the philosophy on which Mr. Hardy sets out to interpret the drama of the Napoleonic era seems at first sight very different. With the theory that all human thought and action is predestined—the expression of an Immanent Will—human responsibility seems to vanish, and with it, as we were saying, the essence of dramatic interest. In the First part, for instance, Napoleon is presented setting on his head the iron crown of Lombardy. The Spirit of the Pities, whom Mr. Hardy himself describes as resembling the Chorus or ideal spectator of Greek drama, shudders and murmurs a warning in Napoleon's ear. He is at once rebuked :—

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS.

Officious sprite,
Thou'rt young, and dost not heed the Cause of things
Which some of us have inkled to thee here;
Else would'st thou not have hailed the Emperor,
Whose acts do but out-shape Its governing.

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES.

I feel, Sire, as I must! This tale of Will
And Life's impulsion by Incognizance
I cannot take.

As humble, if not ideal, spectators, we are inclined to sympathise; and here as often elsewhere we feel acutely that the problem raised by Mr. Hardy's scheme is—how is any serious and sustained dramatic interest compatible with the attitude of mind demanded by the Immanent Will, the Spirit of the Years, and the whole philosophic purport of the play?

If we state this problem, it is not, let us hasten to explain, with any idea of suggesting a solution. Any adequate discussion of it seems to border uncomfortably near on metaphysics, and metaphysics, besides being incredibly exhausting and difficult, are really hardly less in place upon the hustings than in the columns of a literary review. It is, moreover, very possible that if, after hours of mental travail, we established the hypothesis that great drama is not conceivable upon such terms, Mr. Hardy might enter smiling into our darkened room and assure us that *The Dynasts* was not intended as drama in that sense at all. "It may hardly be necessary to inform readers," he said two years ago, "that in devising this chronicle-piece no attempt has been made to create that completely organic structure of action, and closely webbed development of character and motive, which are demanded in a drama strictly self-contained." We shall therefore content ourselves with mentioning a flaw which may, we think, be found to lurk in the fabric of the drama when time and its completion make more thorough criticism possible, and devote our attention more exclusively to its Second part.

The First part, which began, it will be remembered, in March 1805, when Napoleon was planning a descent upon the English coasts, ended with Trafalgar, Austerlitz and the death of Pitt. The opening of the Second part brings us face to face with Fox and the Ministry of All the Talents. Jena and Eylau follow, and the conference with Alexander at Tilsit. Then comes the opening of the Peninsular campaign, Wagram, and the overthrow of Austria, ending in the divorce of Josephine and the marriage of Marie Louise, and finally Torres Vedras, Albuera, and the birth of the King of Rome. There is nothing, then, so decisive in the modelling of this part. It is in the nature of things a period of transition and development towards the climax which awaits us in the Third. But it differs also from the First in another and, as it seems to us, more significant way. In the early part England seemed personified in Nelson and Pitt, and those two commanding personalities perhaps a little obscured one of the chief intentions of Mr. Hardy's scheme. In his early preface he told us that "the provokingly slight regard paid to English influence and action throughout the struggle by those Continental writers who had dealt imaginatively with Napoleon's career seemed always to leave room for a new handling of the theme which should re-embody the features of that influence in their true proportion." With the disappearance of Nelson and Pitt this purpose stands out much clearer. It is significant that Wellington in this part is a mute figure, practically unseen, and England therefore is represented by a host of minor characters who, as here presented at least, have no distracting individuality about them and seem merely expressions of the English spirit—the "enisl'd Britannic quality," as Mr. Hardy says—against which Napoleon's assaults broke like mountainous waves in vain. "This," sings the Chorus of the Years antiphonally to "aerial music"—

This, O this, is the cramp that grips!
And freezes the Emperor's finger-tips
From signing a peace with the Land of Ships.

The Universal-Empire plot
Demands the rule of that wave-walled spot;
And peace with England cometh not!

England therefore stands out as the one obstacle which Napoleon cannot destroy. If he is the hero of this part of the play, she is Fate. And in point of fact Napoleon, who in the first part figured rather as a relentless engine of destruction than as a man, becomes increasingly human as the play proceeds. He almost yields Magdeburg to the beauty and the tears of Queen Louisa of Prussia, and later on his adamantine nature softens now and again in the scenes with Josephine and Marie Louise. England meanwhile is flinging back the Berlin Decrees and holding head against all his efforts in Spain. She is not Fox or Wellington or Sheridan or Moore or the spies at Tilsit or the carousing Prince Regent or the witless old king, though all these are part of her, but she is Napoleon's nemesis. As this drama, therefore, in Three Parts, Nineteen Acts, and One Hundred and Thirty Scenes, with some hundreds of speaking characters and many millions of mute, proceeds towards its climax, it seems to approximate to the conditions of the drama that we know. The issues narrow down, the one essential conflict takes increasing prominence, and Napoleon stands out in single combat with the laws and forces which he has outraged and trodden down, much as Agamemnon or Œdipus or Macbeth.

So indeed we felt again and again, but the supernatural agencies were always at our shoulder to read the moral otherwise, and our dramatic instincts went cold at their touch. If Napoleon is a puppet, there are clearly no rights and wrongs in what he does. He says so to the Queen at Tilsit when refusing her Magdeburg :—

Some force within me, baffling mine intent,
Hurries me onward, whether I will or no.
My star, my star is what's to blame—not I.
It is unswervable!

. . . . . .

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS.

He spoke thus at the Bridge of Lodi. Strange,
He's of the few in Europe who discern
The working of the Will.

Our suspense of opinion, therefore, remains a suspense. If the difficulties of Mr. Hardy's scheme suggest themselves strongly to us, they must have suggested themselves to an artist of his achievement and capacity with twice and three times the force. If we differ from him ultimately on its merits and practicability, it can only be after a long and careful study of the whole play. Whatever the verdict which posterity may pass upon it, it is not wrong merely because it is new, nor impracticable because to grasp its whole purport and bearing is difficult. In the end Mr. Hardy may prove triumphantly that in building up this complex and mighty panorama of spiritual agencies, nations and men, he has reconciled the inculcation of an historic lesson with the expression of a philosophic creed and subordinated both to the ends of literature. In that hope he has our best wishes for the completion of his play.

Sunday School Chronicle Feb 22. 1906

"The Dynasts," a Drama. By Thomas Hardy. Vols. I. and II. (Macmillan & Co., Ltd. 4s. 6d. net., each).

THE publication of the second part of "The Dynasts" heightens our admiration of one of the most notable modern achievements in literature.

But if Mr. Hardy has not attempted [illegible] the closely-welded development [illegible], he has succeeded splendidly in making every person in the [illegible] a living person. It is amazing how actual every picture is, and one wonders what technical performance has contributed to the effect. The explanation can be found by scrutiny of the interpolated passages of description; by means of these, which are written in a highly condensed and exceptionally pure English, the poet sets the scene before the reader's eyes, a moving scene which, viewed from the prescribed point, puts him in possession of the disposition of the crowd, and of the reason for such disposition. We venture to say that people unfamiliar with military matters will get a clearer idea of the operations in the Peninsular War from the few pages of dumb show contained in these volumes than they will get from howsoever patient study of Napier's classical work on the same subject.

Of the literary form we have not space to speak at length. Prose and verse, sometimes rhymed, sometimes blank, are mingled; the former is always pure English, as one would expect from this author; the blank verse is unequal in merit, but occasionally it rises to the height of the Elizabethan dramatists at their best; the rhymed verse is "difficult," and frequently harsh. But minutiæ of criticism are ridiculous. "The Dynasts" is a great dramatic poem, and it is possible that Thomas Hardy will be remembered by it when all his novels have been forgotten.

V. E. M.

Daily Express
Feb 9. 1906.

Thomas Hardy, Dramatist.

The Second Portion of the Napoleonic Drama.

By SIDNEY DARK.
(Published To-day.)

After an interval of two years, Messrs. Macmillan publish to-day the second volume of "The Dynasts," Mr. Thomas Hardy's drama of "the great Historical Calamity or Clash of Peoples artificially brought about some hundred years ago," of Napoleon wrestling with the world.

The scheme of "The Dynasts" is "a panoramic show" of Europe in labour. The one great ambition-mad and unscrupulous man rushes on his way, kings and emperors are his puppets, the common people in Paris, as in London and Berlin, rejoice or suffer as he wills. And all the while he is himself the sport of the Fates, the Spirits who form the Chorus of the drama, and who laugh or sneer or pity according to their kind.

The form of the play is difficult, as immense as the theme, at times chaotic. There are in this second part 125 speaking characters, not including the Spirits, six acts, and forty-three scenes.

The story of Napoleon is taken up after Austerlitz, and this second portion of the drama covers Jena, Tilsit, the driving of the Bourbons from Spain, Corunna, Wagram, Talavera, the divorce of Josephine, the marriage to Maria Louisa, the birth of the King of Rome, Wellington in the Peninsula, and concludes with the reception of the news of Albuera by mad King George III. at Windsor, and the libertine Prince Regent at Carlton House.

Ever-present Drama.

But with all the immensity of the ground covered, the "idea" of drama is never absent, and the interest is never allowed to drop. Mr. Hardy has not merely written an accurate historical chronicle in dialogue form, he has added the annotations and explanations of the seer to the records of the historian. He has made it easy to understand the "behind" of things.

There is not one unnecessary scene, and, indeed, the little casual scenes between citizens, soldiers, deserters, and so on are essential to the psychology of the drama, while Napoleon divorcing Josephine and Napoleon rejoicing at the birth of his son again supply invaluable sidelights on the character of the man who was used by fate to harry the nations of the world.

Moreover, Mr. Hardy absolutely succeeds in making one realise the inevitableness of it all, and the note of the inevitable is the note of all true tragic drama.

Right at the end of the play he makes the Spirit of the Years say to the Spirit of the Pities:—

Mild one, be not too touched with human fate;
Such is the drama, such the mortal state:
No sign of thine can null the plan predestinate!

While in other places the poet refers to the Fate, who holds the world in the hollow of his hand, of whom one may recall Mr. Phillips' description as "Lord above Lords, and God above the Gods," as the Will, and this Will was itself slave to Napoleon.

The Will grew conscious of command,
And ordered issue as he planned.

Unequal Results.

Mr. Hardy has written his drama partly in prose, partly in blank verse, partly in rhymed lines, and (one naturally writes with not a little diffidence) the quality of the writing is strangely and, indeed, almost irritatingly unequal.

There are many magnificent passages, among which one may quote the description by one of the Spirits of the anger of the German people against the French Emperor:—

So doth the Will objectify itself
In likeness of a sturdy people's wrath,
Which takes no count of the new trends of time,
And trusts ebbed glory in a present need.
What if their strength should equal not their fire,
And their devotion dull their vigilance?

And, again, this fine description of Eylau:—

Snows incarnadined were thine, O Eylau, field of the wide white spaces,
And frozen lakes, and frozen limbs, and blood iced hard as it left the veins;
Steel-cased squadrons swathed in cloud-drift, plunging to doom through pathless places,
And forty thousand dead and near dead, strewing the early-nighted plains.

The idea of the helplessness of the common people sent out to kill each other for reasons they know nothing of is expressed in the following Carlylean passage:—

I see red smears upon the sickly dawn,
And seeming drops of gore. On earth below
Are men—unnatured and mechanic drawn—
Mixed nationalities in row and row,
Wheeling them to and fro
In mixed dissociate from their souls' demand,
For dynasts' ends that few even understand.

Stately Words.

While one cannot forbear quoting the beautiful speech of Queen Hortense when she is telling Napoleon of her mother Josephine's willingness to submit to his will:—

. . . . . She bids me say
That now, as always, she submits herself
With chastened dignity, to circumstance,
And will descend, at notice, from your throne—
As in days earlier she ascended it—
In questionless obedience to your will.

The following speech made by Fox in the first act is quite extraordinarily banal as blank verse:—

Trotter, indeed you may well stare at me!
I look warm, eh?—and I am windless, too.

And the following is certainly at least clumsy:—

Yea, the soul of a nation distrest
Is aflame,
And heaving with eager unrest
In its aim
At supreme desperations to blazon the national name!

In a scene between the servants at the Tuileries, one of them, referring to Josephine, says:—

So, poor old girl, she's wailed her Miserere Mei, as Mother Church says. I knew she was to get the sack ever since he came back.

This may be realistic, but it jars not a little after magnificent poetry and in the midst of a work of fine imagination.

But with it all the blemishes are few and the achievement very great. One may, perhaps, personally prefer the Hardy of "Far from the Madding Crowd," of "The Trumpet Major," of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles."

But be that as it may, "The Dynasts" deserves in these days when men are mostly content with small endeavours, the fullest recognition as a work of Miltonic ambition and at times of Miltonic success.

"The Dynasts." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan. 6s. 6d.)

Dingley Chronicle
Dated April 14th 1906

"The Dynasts" (London: Macmillan and Co., price 6s. 6d. net).—When Mr. Thomas Hardy published the first volume of the "Dynasts" he opened the eyes of the critics to his abilities, and also to the greatness of his conception. There was such daring originality, and such mastery of treatment, that eulogiums were the order of the day, but a doubt was expressed as to whether he would be able to continue his gigantic task. How he has succeeded is soon learned by a perusal of the second volume, which has just been published. It is a great epic, and future ages will relegate it to its true position amongst the monumental works of the world's greatest poets. The inevitable looms largely throughout the work, and Mr. Hardy makes one recognise the impotence of even the greatest of this earth as opposed to destiny. In this volume we see the men who made history, hear them speak, and hear the longings of their ambition, yet we still see the wheel of destiny slowly turning. Writing of this work a well-known critic says:—"While we are hardly prepared to claim that 'The Dynasts' is the finest dramatic poem in English literature, it is unquestionably an exceedingly remarkable and powerful piece of work, as full of ideality as it is of storm and stress, and it is impossible not to delight in the consummate artistic skill with which the poet has treated the most striking episode of the Great War. . . . 'The Dynasts' is a monument of true poetic feeling and deep study of human nature."

strongly to us, they must have suggested themselves to an artist of his achievement and capacity with twice and three

Dynasts. Part II. American Reviews.

POETRY AND DRAMA

Hardy—The Dynasts: A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. Part Second. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan $1.50.

The second part of Mr. Hardy's drama more than fulfils his promise. It will hardly lead you to alter your opinion of his judgment in the use of verse; but it substantiates the greatness of the undertaking, and it is with respect and enthusiasm that one feels oneself bound to honor the spirit of the whole remarkable exploit.

It is still true that the book is encumbered with much detail that it is needless and even hurtful to read; but that is a matter of arrangement. The feat that Mr. Hardy achieves with his reader is of an artistic generosity that seems to us without precedent, and it deserves unreckoning thanks. He seems to supply the brain of the reader with gray matter from scene to scene and page to page.

In most published drama, whether it be for acting or no, very much is left to the imagination of the reader; and it has become a convention of dramatic poetry to interrupt the verse as little as possible with description or stage directions. And yet, if imagination is the rare gift we know, it is clearly rash enough for a dramatist to leave his work to any such highly strained quality of mercy. The visual imagination is rarest of all, even among actors and professional managers. And yet there persists in dramatic poetry the blindest confidence in every reader's power to visualize scene, action, and that nameless perspective that makes poetry,—all from a few sparse sentences, most formally set down, if at all.

But in the case of "The Dynasts" it is neither unjust nor ironical to say that the prose of the scene—pictures and "stage" directions (with the cosmos for a stage),—fulfils the office of poetry much more efficiently, as a rule, than the blank-verse dialogue. As a seer of great issues, Mr. Hardy makes us see what he will, and that with a splendor, a finality of phrase, and a reach of perspective that fairly catch at the breath. He carries his hearers with him, upon some magical strip of a prayer-rug, and bids them look down for once upon "red armies" and "blue armies," upon a little cloud of dust, raised by the carnage of men and horses cut to pieces, near a little stream "trickling to the sea"; upon "minute red sentinels" creeping backwards and forwards noiselessly; upon "innumerable human figures busying themselves like cheese-mites."

For the matter of characterization, he limns in a few words of description more personality than most writers can convey in the space of half a novel. And I am inclined to believe that the very largeness of his scheme here—the stretch of the stage and the sense of tremendous forces at work—adds to the poignant *timbre* of the human voices when they speak, and makes tenfold significant the lack of *timbre* in that voice of the protagonist, Bonaparte. Indeed, this achievement of something that I would like to call human tone-color is perhaps the most dramatic quality in the whole drama. To read from the forlorn bravado of the deserters and camp-followers in Act III. and the Chorus of Pities and of Ironies, back and forth to the speech of Napoleon everywhere, is like coming from some portentous Cave of Echoes, to rap upon a cracked piece of deaf pottery outside.

However it all may strike the historian's mind as a spectacle of predigested history, to the lay mind Mr. Hardy has made a wonderful gift. He has invented a new sensation.

Putnam's Monthly. Nov. '06

New York Times Mar 17-06

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March 25. 1906.

HARDY'S PANORAMIC DRAMA.

The Second Part of "The Dynasts"—The Substance of a Prose Masterpiece, but Not a Great Poem.*

Written for THE NEW YORK TIMES SATURDAY REVIEW OF BOOKS by

H. W. BOYNTON.

ABOUT two years ago appeared the first part of a work which presented unusual obstacles to the reviewer. "The Dynasts" appeared to lie outside the familiar categories. Was it in any sense a drama? Did it contain any true poetry? Was it not, on the whole, rather a joke than an enigma? There was no doubt, at all events, of the delightful readiness with which it lent itself to ridicule. Many of us made good use of the loan. There was nothing grossly unfair in our part of the transaction. The thing had certainly its ridiculous aspects; the question remained for us—and it is now being urged with much vigor by various critics in whom the perusal of the second part of the trilogy has induced a plucking up of spirit or a change of heart—whether it is not also in its way sublime.

This question the present writer is, for himself, constrained to answer flatly in the negative. It is not a great work, because its workmanship is not great. There have been generations when to make that remark would have been to utter an intolerable platitude. Just now, however, we seem to have thrown over so much of the ballast of criticism (or are we ignorant of it?)—we are so bent on riding light and going as we please, that we deserve to have a steadying truism thrown aboard now and then. Let us be glad, let us be mad, let us forget the old conventions. This is a new age: the ancients climbed Parnassus; we are going to show what elevation may be gained by means of the bootstrap. If any reader of this note thinks that a great writer is a man who has great thoughts and partially expressed them, or has mediocre thoughts and greatly expresses them, there is nothing for him in the rest of it.

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BUT this denial of Mr. Hardy's workmanship is not based on distrust of its mere novelty of form. That form, indeed, a little examination proves to possess no real novelty. Mr. Hardy is essentially a writer of fiction, and he has produced in "The Dynasts" a piece of condensed historical fiction. Descriptive and narrative are taken care of by prolonged "stage directions" and by elaborate "dumb show." A full chorus is provided to do the necessary commenting and moralizing. Mr. Hardy in his original preface speaks of it as a drama, and later as a "panoramic show." It is not more a drama than "The Divine Comedy," and not more a panoramic show than Carlyle's "French Revolution." Its novelty of character and of form is, in short, purely superficial. Whether this work be called a drama, or a panorama, or an epic, or a history, is a matter of definition which, for the moment, we cheerfully waive; we challenge any one to prove it a new thing of any kind.

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BUT, taking it as what it professes to be, an imaginative presentation of historical fact, wherein does it fall of high achievement? Primarily, one must think, in its failure as poetry. Mr. Hardy's blank verse is an empty thing—altogether an unnatural mode of expression for him. It is amazing to find some commentators discerning in his present abuse of metre evidences of "the grand style." He is said to have found an instrument of his own; his verses are, with some conceded roughness, said to be animated by a "high quality of dramatic sincerity," "genius," and "vision." Let us examine the facts a little, and see what we shall see. The prose dialogue we find to be uniformly good; we feel its integrity. Mr. Hardy here employs a medium of which he is a master. To read a passage made up in part of this prose and in part of that verse is to oscillate sharply between pleasure and dismay. When these persons speak prose they are in character, they are credible, they live and move. When they attempt to drop into poetry the result is either the adoption of a crabbed and unreal prose cut up into lengths, or a dubious echo of the Elizabethan rhetoric. Which is the true King George—the man who in plain prose commends to Pitt a grinning match through horse collars as a very humorous sport, or he who says

I read it as a thing
Of signal augury and one which bodes
Heaven's confidence in me and in my line,
That I should rule as king in such an age.

Not even at great moments does this blank verse rise to the occasion. Nelson is dying, and some recent deaths among his men are reported to him:

NELSON.

Ah—
So many lives—in such a glorious cause.

* * *

I join them soon, soon, soon—O where is Hardy?
Will nobody bring Hardy to me—none?
He must be killed, too. Surely Hardy's dead?

A MIDSHIPMAN.

He's coming soon, my Lord. The constant call
On his full heed of this most mortal fight
Keeps him from hastening hither as he would.

It is surely bad enough to have Nelson represented as so tamely sentimental in his last moments without visiting upon us this mouthing midshipman. Nelson would have been near death indeed to endure so declamatory an urchin—as learned in Shakespeare as if he had been a Recording Angel, or the Spirit of the Years himself—or as Fox, who is represented as uttering himself (in speech with a French conspirator) as follows:

GEVRILLIERE.
[Of Napoleon.]
Ceasing to bluff, then ceases he to be.
None sees that written largelier than himself.

FOX.

Then what may be the valued revelation
That you can unlock in such circumstance?
Sir, I incline to spell you as a spy.
And not the honest help for honest men
You gave you out to be.

If this is sincere blank verse, Heaven defend us from blank verse!

We can have no disposition to speak flippantly of a work undertaken in a serious spirit, and worthy of serious interest. Mr. Hardy's blank verse fills us with something much more nearly akin to distress than amusement. What a fine consistent work this might have been if our master of vigorous prose had been content with his medium: poet he is not, and never will be. How idle, with all its appearance of qualification, is this dictum of one of the English reviewers: "Of the noblest poetry Mr. Hardy surely has all 'the matter and substance,' even if we must constrain ourselves to deny him the 'manner and the style.'" In what case is our criticism, upon what principles is it founded, when it is still possible for that hoary and oft-exploded fallacy, which strives to divorce the body of poetry from its soul, to be revamped? Noble poetry is noble matter and manner; if Mr. Hardy had noble poetic matter he would have noble poetic manner; surely this is one of the elementary principles of criticism.

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IF "The Dynasts," however, is not a great work it is certainly an interesting study in its kind. The imaginative historian is here trying to do two things—first, to give human body and reality to the Napoleonic struggle, already half a myth; second, to do tardy justice to England's part in that struggle. There are moments when these two objects appear to change places in order of importance; they were perhaps of almost equal weight in the writer's mind. But a basis of patriotism is not a bad underplanning for the imagination; it is hard to fancy what the poets and historians would have done without their National or party bias. In his larger mood Mr. Hardy is the unprejudiced and more or less remote spectator of the thronging events and persons of his "panorama." This dramatist and his audience are not suffered to occupy comfortable seats and to watch the story unfold before them without effort on their part.

"A panoramic show like the present," says the author, "is a series of historical 'ordinates.' * * * The spectator, in thought, becomes a performer whenever called upon, and cheerfully makes himself the utility man of the gape." So here we go, all of us, flitting over the earth's surface at different elevations, our view often obscured by clouds, but getting a glimpse of all sorts of activities, now in London, now in Berlin, now in Madrid; descending to enter now into the boudoir of Josephine, now into the Royal Pavilion at Brighton, now into the traveling carriage in which Napoleon bids welcome to the new Empress. Over us hover a variety of attendant spirits, or "phantom intelligences," with their comments, ironical, grim, or tender, upon the play of human circumstance before us. These intelligences compose unhappy verse; it is in the stage directions and "dumb shows" that we find the most striking elements in the whole work. Here is our real panorama:

ACT SECOND. Scene I. The Pyrenees and valleys adjoining.

The view is from the upper air, immediately over the region that lies between Bayonne on the north, Pampeluna on the south, and San Sebastian on the west, including a portion of the Cantabrian Mountains. The month is February, and snow covers not only the peaks but the lower slopes. The roads over the passes are well beaten.

DUMB SHOW.

At various elevations multitudes of Napoleon's soldiery, to the number of about 30,000, are discerned in a creeping progress across the frontier from the French to the Spanish side. The long thin columns serpentine along the roads, but are sometimes broken, while at others they disappear altogether behind vertical rocks and overhanging woods. The heavy guns and the white-brown tilts of the baggage-wagons seem the largest objects in the procession, which are dragged laboriously up the incline to the watershed, their lumbering being audible as high as the clouds. Simultaneously, the River Badassoa, in a valley to the west, is being crossed by a train of artillery and another 30,000 men. * * *

This is your art of imaginative realism with a vengeance. Note how the details, the very enumeration, bring home the vision—certainly a fine achievement of the art which is and always has been peculiar to Mr. Hardy. There is no doubt whatever about the power of conception or of projection here. Mr. Hardy does, in his own person, lead us upon a height and show to us the kingdoms of the world. He brings home to us most vividly the physical paltriness of the insect called man, the ludicrous insignificance of his earthly estate. He fills us with a kindly contempt for ourselves which is not the least luxurious of sensations. He gives us, further, a new sense of the human meaning of so complex a manoeuvre as a Napoleonic warfare; the private, the poltroon, the deserter, find in him a spokesman. This work has in it the substance, in short, of a true prose masterpiece; but not all the King's metres and all the King's feet could conceivably make a poem of it; for Mr. Hardy has nothing of the poet in him.

H. W. B.

Andover, Mass., March, 1906.

"THE DYNASTS," BY THOMAS HARDY

PART SECOND

ONCE upon a time a long-winded French dramatist, one M. Joseph Peladan, sent to M. Jules Claretie, then managing the Odeon Theatre, a Wagnerian drama called "The Prince of Byzantium." It was a little thing of his own divided into forty-eight acts and seventy-six tableaux.

M. Claretie felt himself obliged to decline it. He pointed out with serious urbanity, though he must have chuckled to himself as he penned the words, that "the accusation brought against the Queen Mother in act 17 and the fearful aspersion cast on the Prince's character in act 49 would render it unsuitable for production at a national state theatre."

You see he did not dare to object to the length of the piece. "How can there be too much of a good thing?" the author might have retorted. Still less did he dare to hint that the play was not a good thing. He took refuge in the gracious subterfuge that the attitude which a national state theatre must assume made the drama unsuited for production on so conventional a stage.

But he neatly implied the real reason. One wonders in what manner Mr. Beerbohm Tree would frame his refusal of Mr. Thomas Hardy's drama of the Napoleonic wars, "The Dynasts," supposing that the author were to submit it to the manager.

For here you have something almost as portentous as Peladan's Wagnerian effort.

IMAGINE any English audience sitting through a play in three parts, nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes!—Imagine a manager, with any regard for his pocket, being called upon to supply a cast for some two hundred characters, each of a distinct but individual importance, and scenery that shifted you in a twinkling from place to place, scattered over a considerable part of the earth's surface, whisked you up, breathless, to the heavens above and plunged you down to the waters that are under the earth!

BUT imagination need not fret itself. Mr. Hardy never intended to submit his drama to the limited facilities of the stage. Rather, he willed to have it played out in that imaginative arena of unlimited resources which lies within the few inches of the human brain.

Of course, not every brain will be able to summon up its resources quickly enough to meet immediately Mr. Hardy's rapidity of appeal. Even that infallible and omniscient person the English critic has owned that the play is a trifling bewildering at first perusal.

"At first all seems amorphous." Thus an unusually acute member of this order confesses with almost unparalleled candor. "After a time, at all events, a portion of the author's purpose is revealed to you, but only a portion. I frankly do not understand all the elaborate scaffolding, though it must have its reason, because the author, it should be remembered, is an architect."

Where the angels of the critical world refuses to tread shall beings of another sort rush in?

FAR be it from me to essay the task. But having read twice over those two parts of "The Dynasts" which have so far appeared (the second is just off the press of the Macmillan Company), it is possible that even the fool may not go wrong in sketching the broad outlines, with some few words about this or that detail which does not transcend the powers of the meanest intelligence.

MR. HARDY'S general scheme is to harmonize, as in some grand oratorio, the discords of that tremendous epoch in human history when Napoleon Bonaparte, the Corsican outcast, was sitting upon an upstart throne which (dropping the language of metaphor) he rarely sat upon, as he was continually quitting it at his own wild will to overrun Europe and overturn older dynasties, including that oldest of all dynasties which occupied and temporarily but unwillingly disoccupied the chair of St. Peter in Rome.

So he gives us a succession of episodes each complete in itself, but each an integral and co-ordinated part of the whole. Each lays bare in its own way the passion of fear, hope or despair, of joy or terror, of love or hate, of high ambition or of low submission, which swayed every condition of mankind, from kings and conquerors down to men and women of the mob, while Napoleon was astounding all civilization.

He makes us feel the infinite importance of the meanest life to itself, the infinite insignificance of the mightiest as well as the meanest in presence of the infinite.

Sitting in judgment over this human [illegible] are certain supernatural [illegible]—the mocking spirits of ironic laughter, the sorrowful spirits of pity, the [illegible] spirits of destiny—[illegible] tramples on the [illegible]

...ture, each according to its kind.

As was said of Carlyle's "French Revolution," this is history told in flashes of lightning. Here, however, the powers of heaven and of hell are invoked to interpret the [illegible] that lie between the flashes.

AMONG the episodes that most impress the imagination are the Hogarthian sketches of the deserters before Astorga and of the madness of King George at Windsor, and the scene where Napoleon announces to Josephine his intention to divorce her in order to secure an heir by a second wife.

Some lines from Josephine's plea on her own behalf may be taken as a fair example of the poetry:—

But why this cruse for lineal matikins,
Made of mere graveyard flesh? You have said yourself
It mattered not, Great Caesar, you declared,
Rank nonsense to his rest; was greater deemed
Even for the isolation. Frederick
Saw, too, no help. It is the fate of such,
Ogres, to be denied the common hope,
As fine forfeiture in the rarer gifts
That Nature yields them. O my husband long,
Will you not purge your soul to value best
That high heredity from brain to brain
Which supersedes mere sequences of blood,
That often vary more from sire to son
Than between furthest strangers!
Napoleon's offspring in his like must lie;
The second of his line be he who shows
Napoleon's soul in later bodiment,
The household father happening as he may.

This is subtly ingenious in thought and of fine rhetorical form. But is it exactly poetry? My own answer would be no. The answers of the English critics are usually yes, though sometimes with a reservation. The Times, for example, likens Mr. Hardy's "wilful and determined plainness of language" to the "noble plainness of Wordsworth," but adds that his verse "never for one moment rises to those clever heights of perfect form where Wordsworth moves at ease."

The Academy, however, rapturizes over "the most beautiful poetry" of Mr. Hardy's supernatural characters. This is interesting, because this same paper, then under a different management, hailed the publication of his first volume of verses with this pungent bit of imaginary conversation:—

Nature (to Mr. Hardy)—You will never be a poet.

Mr. Hardy—I shall.

HE ought to have said "I will." For it is by sheer will power that Mr. Hardy overcomes his insensibility to the natural magic of poetry in sufficient measure to turn out admirable verse.

If you seek true poetry in "The Dynasts" you will find it in the prose, and especially in those marvellous little bits of description which he calls "dumb show" and which take the place of what in the ordinary libretto would be stage directions.

MERCVRE DE FRANCE—15-IV-1906

Quel est le théâtre qui pourrait monter **The Dynasts**, drame des guerres napoléoniennes, en trois parties, dix-neuf actes et cent trente scènes? Mais l'auteur, Mr. Thomas Hardy, n'a jamais songé à faire piteusement mouvoir sur les planches les personnages abstraits et concrets de son colossal poème épique; c'est à une représentation imaginaire qu'il convie le lecteur. Chaque phrase gigantesquement évocatrice entraîne l'esprit à des hauteurs vertigineuses d'où l'on contemple un spectacle fantastique, incroyable et cependant tout simplement réel. Quand parut la première partie de ce drame, ce fut, il faut bien le dire, de l'ahurissement. La conception unique de l'ouvrage obligeait à s'aventurer loin des sentiers battus, et les critiques au cerveau de plomb refusaient de s'élever au-dessus des continents et des mers pour embrasser d'un seul coup d'œil le vaste drame napoléonien. Bien des louanges même paraissaient hypocrites, car on y sentait le désir d'être poli, sinon pitoyable, à l'égard d'un écrivain de génie qui se trompait. Certes Mr. Thomas Hardy demande à nos imaginations un effort peu ordinaire; mais quelle joie, après le vertige ébloui du premier essor, de le suivre à nouveau, dans cette seconde partie et, grâce à un peu plus d'habitude, de distinguer mieux le spectacle, d'apercevoir d'un horizon à l'autre le jeu des Forces indifférentes qui façonnent l'histoire du monde. Nous attendons maintenant avec impatience le troisième volume, certains de n'être pas déçus. Nous relirons l'œuvre dans son ensemble; mais déjà, dans notre esprit, c'est une galopade effrénée d'images, de tableaux apaisés ou violents, comme si nous nous étions promenés longuement là-haut dans les nuages, à travers un palais démesuré, où les panneaux et les tympans, les voûtes et les plafonds, les rosaces et les fenêtres sont ornés de fresques et de vitraux dus à l'art merveilleux d'un artiste divin. Le souvenir de ce spectacle prodigieux ne laisse place, dès qu'on le rappelle, à aucun autre souvenir. Il semble que, rêvant accoudé sur la balustrade, du haut de la terrasse d'où l'on découvre un horizon lointain, l'on voit se dresser soudain une longue ligne de montagnes neigeuses, baignées de lumières infiniment variées, coupées d'ombres multiples, avec des pics et des sommets à profusion soutenant l'arche du ciel... Mr. Thomas Hardy a compris l'Histoire en visionnaire, et il possède le magique pouvoir d'évoquer pour nous ces visions. Comme George Meredith, dans son *Ode in contribution to the Song of French History*, comme Elémir Bourges dans son incomparable *Nef*, Mr. Thomas Hardy prouve ce qu'avait déjà affirmé Aristote, que la Poésie dépasse l'Histoire, parce qu'elle a une signification plus vaste et plus de vérité.

Quel est l'auteur de **Borgia**, drame en vers portant en sous titre: *a period play*? Ce n'est pas là encore une œuvre destinée à la scène et si elle n'a pas les proportions gigantesques des *Dynasts*,

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The Nation,

NEW YORK.

From the issue of April 19 1906

The second part of "The Dynasts" (Macmillan), Mr. Thomas Hardy's "drama of the Napoleonic Wars in three parts, nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes," prevails a little over the regret that we expressed at the publication of the first part that so fine a faculty as Mr. Hardy's should be employed in so uncouth and monstrous a production. There is a greater proportionate amount of prose in this part, and Mr. Hardy's prose is always more readable than his rough-hewn, unmelodious verse. There is, too, here rather less of unconvincing, supernatural machinery, while of the hundred speaking parts of terrestrial personages all are vividly actualized. The gift of panoramic vision over the face of the historied globe which constituted the chief element of imaginative force in the first part, persists throughout the second, and Mr. Hardy's pessimistic philosophy of history as the operation of

"Unmaliced, unimpassioned, nescient Will,"

becomes still clearer. We hesitate to commit ourselves to an opinion of the final meaning and achievement of "The Dynasts" before the publication of the third and last part. In the meantime, from the curious assortment of lyrical interludes, in metres ranging from Sapphics to *terza rima*, wherewith Mr. Hardy has chosen to adorn his colossal enterprise, we may select this fine bit of "aerial music" as a specimen of his poetic vein at its best:

"They come, beset by riddling hail;
They sway like sedges in a gale;
They fall, and win, and win, and fall. Albuera!

They gain the ground there, yard by yard,
Their brows and hair and lashes charred,
Their blackened teeth set firm and hard.

Their mad assailants rave and reel,
And face, as men who scorn to feel,
The close-lined, three-edged prongs of steel,

Till faintness follows closing-in,
When, faltering headlong down, they spin
Like leaves. But those pay well who win Albuera.

Out of six thousand souls that sware
To hold the mount or pass elsewhere,
But eighteen hundred muster there.

Pale Colonels, Captains, ranksmen lie,
Facing the earth or facing sky;—
They strove to live, they stretch to die.

Friends, foemen, mingle; heap and heap.—
Hide their hacked bones, Earth!—deep, deep, deep,
Where harmless worms caress and creep.

Hide their hacked bones, Earth!—deep, deep, deep,
Where harmless worms caress and creep.—
What man can grieve? what woman weep?
Better than waking is to sleep! Albuera!"

"Book News" (America) July 1906

An Experiment in Dramatic Art*

LITERATURE is not yet done with things of large proportions. While Alfred Noyes continues serially in "Blackwood's" his epic poem "Drake," Mr. Hardy gives to the public the second volume of his extended effort in chronicle drama. When the first volume of "The Dynasts" appeared two years ago, even the rabid literary innovator hesitated at the forbidding subtitle announcing a drama in three parts, nineteen acts, and—Mr. Hardy has unpardonably accentuated the size—one hundred and thirty scenes. But if the work was large, the spirit also was large, and the instrument of expression—blank verse—pliant to the touch of no inexperienced hand.

The most notable point of interest in this drama is the complete unfolding of the mind of Hardy. The author of "Hap" and other of the Wessex poems, the Hardy of the "Woodlanders" and "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," is here matured into the Spirit of the Years, wise, stoical, grandly fatalistic. But the maturing merely reveals the younger Hardy with the early convictions intensified into a kind of inevitable pessimism. Much is made of the unconscious unfolding of the Universal Will, of eternal changeless Chance; and these phrases almost build up a poetic doctrine of Fatalistic Pantheism.

Another interesting element in the drama is the evidence of Greek influence in both plan and tone. The tone of hopeless resignation to blind Fortune is present in all its force, recalling Æschylus and Sophocles in the sobless contemplation and questioning of the darker tracings of Divinity. Hardy, indeed, goes one step further, and brands that Divinity conscienceless; but without any strong, defiant note, or a Nitzschean boast in the supremacy of the individual will.

In plan, the Spirits of Pity and of Irony furnish the Greek chorus similitudes, and make the action of the drama stereoscopic in character; for the impression is not that of immediate presentative movement, but of projected action. The dumb shows further this impression, and it is interesting to note that the most real characters in the drama are the commoners, notably the Wessex citizens.

Mr. Hardy is at no pains to spare the English race the opprobrium of hypocrisy in the assumption to itself of all the moral virtues—witness the satirical rendering of the Prince George-Fitzherbert liaison. Satire of the social vices, in fact, is an important element of this second part.

A just estimate of the whole work demands a reservation of personal judgment until the appearance of the concluding seven acts. Interesting reading the first two parts have proved. Thus far the dynasts themselves have been historically weighed and truthfully presented, but not necessarily, therefore, humanized. Napoleon himself is a Greek type presenting a Greek problem.

G. E. ROTH.

*THE DYNASTS. A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. By Thomas Hardy. The Macmillan Company.

Dublin Express, 1 Jan. 1907

JANUARY MAGAZINES

In the new number of the "Fortnightly Review" the place of honour is occupied by Mr. Thomas Hardy's poem entitled "New Year's Eve." It purports to convey the spirit of a dialogue between the human and the divine at this moment in the history of the human race, wherein God says He has finished another year, and the mortal daringly inquires, "What's the good of it?"

Then He: "My labours logicless
You may explain; not I:
Sense-sealed I have wrought, without a guess
That I evolved a Consciousness
To ask for reasons why!

"Strange, that ephemeral creatures who
By my own ordering are,
Should see the shortness of my view,
Use ethic tests I never knew,
Or made provision for!"

Yorkshire Daily Observer
4 Jan 1907

THE "FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW."

The "Fortnightly Review" may certainly claim to range from "grave to gay, from lively to severe." It opens with some dismal pessimistic stanzas from the pen of Mr. Thomas Hardy, strongly phrased in not a few of their lines, but so far from "justifying the ways" that one can only marvel the author should have taken the trouble to indite them. Then we have another attempt to make our flesh creep by the professional wailers and weepers of Tariff Reform.

The Scotsman.
3 Jan. 1907

REVIEWS AND PERIODICALS.

The Fortnightly Review (2s. 6d. — London: Chapman & Hall) comes out with an unusually interesting number this month. Mr. Thomas Hardy contributes a seasonable poem on "New Year's Eve," the characteristically pessimistic temper of which may be judged from its opening lines:—

"I have finished another year," said God,
"In grey, green, white, and brown;
I have strewn the leaf upon the sod,
Sealed up the worm within the clod,
And let the last sun down."

"And what's the good of it?" I said.
The reply to this question being represented as, humanly speaking, evasive.

Notes & Queries
Jan 12. 1907

A POEM by Mr. Thomas Hardy, entitled 'New Year's Eve,' opens out *The Fortnightly* for 1907. Not very satisfactory is it as an explanation of Divine purpose in shaping the years.

MR. HARDY AND TENNYSON

To the Editor of THE ACADEMY

SIR,—I find so much that is orthodox and informing, in general, in your bibliographical and literary notes, that it is with regret I read your comparison of Mr. Thomas Hardy's New Year verses in *The Fortnightly* with Tennyson's well-known lines in No. LVI. of "In Memoriam," in Number 1809 of the ACADEMY, whereby you appear to join him along with Mr. Hardy's pessimism.

Tennyson was not in any sense the poet of pessimism, and it is unfair to take an isolated passage from his great poem and give it as conclusive when he himself answers his own thought by some grander hope within him in a later mood. When we read his "two voices" where he is really setting forth the same problems we take our meaning of his message from the evolution of his argument—the divine Hope he solaces himself with that "*all is well.*" So here. The very last line you quote after

What hope of answer or redress?
Behind the veil, behind the veil

clinches the matter in his *faith*. I have never read the passages you quote without feeling that Tennyson who accepts everywhere evolution

Evolution ever working after some ideal good

really meant it monstrous to think

That man her [nature's] last work

should have no purpose in his nobler striving, that if it were not so he was the greater monster

Dragons in their prime
That tore each other in their slime
Were mellow music matched with him.

To the poet of evolution this seems so monstrous he will never accept it. (He indicates pessimism in these very comparisons.) Nor does he: cxx 5 In Memoriam:

Whatever I have said or sung—
Some bitter notes my heart *would* give—
Yea, though there often seemed to live
A contradiction on the tongue,

Yet *Hope* had never lost her youth:
She did but look through dimmer eyes
Or Love but play'd with gracious lies,
Because he felt so fix'd in truth

Love is and ever was my Lord and King.

. . . . . .

And *all is well*, though faith and form
Be sundered in the *night* of *fear*;
Well roars the storm to those that hear
A *deeper voice* across the storm,

and this were enough to remove the stigma, were it not further emphasised in:

That God that ever lives and loves
One God, one Law, one element
And one far-off divine event
To which the whole creation moves.

Mr. Hardy can find a voice within him greater than the infinite of which he is only the creature? His *God* is not Tennyson's:

That ever lives and loves.

Shorthouse, in "John Inglesant" knows a better way:

"Only the infinite pity is sufficient for the infinite pathos of life."

If one were to take Mr. Hardy's "New Year" verses seriously, who could work forward to any higher hope—the ideal would perish from off the earth. What has poetry to do with anything but the ideal? Mr. Hardy has looked so long on the tragic side of life (and we sympathise with him so long as he keeps to *nature*) that it has become to him the only *fact*. It is as if a man should declare, after being so long in a dungeon, there could not be any blue sky or golden sun. A child would know better.

There is another side to tragedy, and Tennyson holds the key. It is Love. Therefore he believes and hopes. At any rate, the comparison of Hardy to Tennyson is odious.

BARNARD GEORGE HOARE.

January 15.

Freethinker Jan 13 1907

There is not a more singular character in the world than that of a thinking man.—FITZOSBORNE.

Thomas Hardy's Offence.

THOMAS HARDY shares with George Meredith the distinction of leading the ranks of living English novelists. Some dull people and some pious people will think this is no great merit. The latter class have a deadly hatred of all recreation; the former class speak sneeringly of what they call "light literature." But recreation is essential to mental and moral as well as bodily health; and light literature, as Meredith has said, is the garden of the soul.

Thomas Hardy is also a poet, though not as great a poet as George Meredith. Competent readers of his novels must have discerned the poetry in them; particularly in those fine passages of description in which he places his characters in vital relation to their environment. Competent readers of his volumes of verse must have recognised the power and subtlety of his conceptions, although he has nothing like George Meredith's mastery of versification.

Thomas Hardy's high place in English literature cannot be denied him. It rests on an ample achievement. But it is fortunate, in a way, that he won this high place before he took to expressing his intimate personal opinions in some of his most striking verses. Had this not been the case, he would have been branded as an "Atheist" and a "blasphemer," and the public would have been solemnly warned against his pernicious influence.

We do not mean that Hardy's ideas on many topics which are the peculiar preserve of Mr. Bumble and Mrs. Grundy were not obvious through his prose writings to readers of passable penetration. After the splendid Preface to the second edition of *Tess* it was impossible even for the densest minds not to see where he stood. The closing reference in the novel itself to the plaguing of Tess by the President of the Immortals was mordant enough, especially for those who remembered Aristophanes and Heine; but the Preface in reply to the critics dotted all the i's and made everything as clear as daylight. The allusion to Mr. Lang as having turned Christian for once in order to castigate an unbeliever, and the reference to the tremendous outburst in *Lear*,

"As flies to wanton boys are we t' the gods,
They kill us for their sport—"

showed that the creator of that dear, adorable, fated heroine was by no means disinclined to accept the orthodox challenge; and we have always regretted that he was not provoked into further defence and justification; but perhaps it was not surprising that those who felt his arrows sought no fresh encounter.

Hardy's view of the world is frankly pessimistic. Now it may be said of pessimism that some are above it and some are below it. Meredith is above it, in the sense that he places his foot upon it after an effort of reason. Whether he is right or wrong is not the point. We are only concerned with his attitude. But most men, including most journalists, and all the champions of "faith," are below pessimism. They are incapable of confronting it. They shrink from it with a more cowardly repulsion. It hurts the thoughtless and the selfish to be told that

"God's in his heaven,
All's right with the world—"

is simply the complacent optimism of comfort and success; that this is not the best of all possible worlds, and that in many respects it would be difficult to conceive a worse one, without assuming what would be incompatible with prolonged existence.

As a pessimistic poet Hardy, like the late James Thomson ("B.V."), will always be cavaire to the general. And he will always be liable to the severe rebuke of the professional and amateur guardians of the public religion. For while an optimist may be a Theist, a pessimist is pretty sure to be an Atheist; unless, indeed, he is in a worse plight, believing in a God and regarding him as a Devil. Hardy almost seems to be in that stage. But we believe it is only seems. Instead of pointedly challenging the God idea, he seeks to fill people with moral dissatisfaction, and this may often be best done by assuming the attitude of theoretical belief.

This appears to be—we do not speak with certitude—the policy of several of Hardy's poems; presumably, also, of the poem entitled "New Year's Eve" which he has written for the January number of the *Fortnightly Review*. At the time of writing we have not seen this poem, but we can guess its character from the two verses which the *Daily News* has been able to quote in anticipation. The poet asks God why he created this earth at all, and is suitably rebuked for his impertinence. God then resumes his old silence:—

"He sank to raptness as of yore,
And opening New Year's Day
Wove it by rote as theretofore,
And went on working evermore
In His unweeting way."

Of course the dear *Daily News* does not relish the poet's "grim pleasantry." It wishes him more "cheerful thoughts" and "wholesome laughter"—such as George Cadbury and his "kept" journalists feel called upon to enjoy at Christmas. At the time which commemorates the birth of Christ people who can do so should eat, drink, and be merry. Millions of other people want meat and drink and are in misery; but it is a poor heart, for all that, which does not rejoice at this blessed season. Thank the Lord for what he has sent you, even if he has left your neighbors empty. By this means you may find that godliness is great gain.

It was inevitable that Hardy's principles should receive the last crushing refutation. At the bottom of the theologian's bag of tricks there always lies the frightful warning against self-destruction. Hardy is told that his New Year's message is "calculated not to make men happier, but to make them commit suicide." Perhaps so, if nothing were left when the optimistic God idea is gone. But something remains. If we lose a Deity we still have Humanity. And if the world can never be quite the paradise of dreams; if a certain measure of evil and misery is indestructible; we may console and support each other, and apply to the worst wounds the antiseptic of sympathy.

G. W. FOOTE.

The Academy,

Academy. HIC JACET 26 Jan. 1907

A FORTNIGHT ago attention was directed in these pages to the poem with which Mr. Thomas Hardy opened the New Year. It was a bitter greeting. Man was represented Job-like asking his Maker bitterly: Why, when it was so easy not to call into being "an ill-used race of men," did you commit the cruel enormity of creation? The answer was stern and contemptuous. It was, in effect, that he who was responsible for the world sat weaving successive New Years automatically, neither caring for suffering nor knowing of it. Man is a creature of many moods, and on this occasion Mr. Hardy was accurately expressing one of them.

The Dynasts. Part Third

The Times (Lit. Suppl.)

Feb. 27th 1908

"THE DYNASTS."

*The Dynasts: A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. By Thomas Hardy. Part First (1904). Part Second (1906). Part Third (1908). (Macmillan, 4s. 6d. net each.)

In war time the stationers' shops or newspaper offices show in their windows large maps stuck with little flags to mark the advance or retreat of the opposing forces. As if from a great height, the passing pedestrian looks down on a vast stretch of country, and he may actually see a hand appear and move a little flag an inch forward or half an inch backward. He is probably glad or sorry, according as the change indicates success or failure for the side which has his sympathies; but his head is more engaged than his heart. Then he turns away, to buy an evening paper for the details of the little flag's movement, and as he reads it the mention of a name he knows or a snatch of descriptive writing bears in upon him with a rush the remembrance that these are not little flags at all, but bodies of men. Each little flag stands for how many hundreds or thousands of sentient men, every one of them with hands as large and as compact of flesh and blood as the hand that moved the little flag so easily. And that swift inch or half-inch forward or backward means how many days and nights of toil and terror, death and agony, awful din and more awful silence. It is some hours before he can soar again to the height from which the armies become little flags; and then he can only do it by forgetting that armies are composed of men.

Mr. Hardy at once soars and remembers. He has brought us now to the close of his great drama of the Napoleonic wars; and, soaring so high as we may above the complete work for a bird's-eye view, we see nothing more prominent in this remarkable achievement than his success in unifying what for our passing pedestrian must remain two different points of vision. He can see Napoleon's Russian army as

A dun-piled caterpillar
Shuffling its length in painful heaves along;

but he sees that the heaves are painful, and he remembers that the caterpillar is composed of men, "tattered men like skeletons," men with "icicles dangling from their hair that clink like glass-lustres as they walk," men who sob like children or burst into raving songs of madness when they learn that their Emperor has deserted them—till the frost stills them into eternal silence as they crouch exhausted round their dying fire. He sees the field of Waterloo like our map with the little flags on it; but he overhears Napoleon's thoughts as he stands in the wood of Bossu alone after all is over. Marie Louise's sobs and the Prince Regent's oaths are as loud in his ears as the cannon of Leipzig. And this unity is not achieved by sudden soarings and swoopings. In spite of the language of the stage-directions ("the point of vision changes" and so forth), we are not conscious of being snatched hither and thither, up and down; and the eye, as it were, is not wearied by sudden alterations of focus. The vision of the mind and the vision of the heart are unified. We see little flags and men at once, and the unity embraces not only the warriors but the passing pedestrian himself—all who are affected by the events.

The secret is Mr. Hardy's choice of Phantom Intelligences—Spirits of the Years, of the Pities, of Rumour, and others—as his chorus, the spectators through whose senses he shall follow the story of his drama. But it is one thing to choose a point of view, another to get to it, and yet another to keep it; and first to have risen to such a point as this and then to have held to it throughout the long and crowded work appears to us an intellectual feat of rare worth and power. From these dizzy heights we see armies like caterpillars; but the supernatural sensibility with which our author endows us for the time enables us to see also the minutest workings of the brain and the heart of every man in every army. After reading the first part of the drama we hazarded a guess that the complete work would prove to be a drama, not of men, but of nations. The guess was at once too wide and too narrow. *The Dynasts* is a drama not of nations only, but of human life; it is also a drama of individual persons. And in the drama of human life, according to Mr. Hardy's philosophic theory, there is a sense in which Napoleon's valet and the rustic who came to Casterbridge to see Bonny burned are as important, and as unimportant, as Napoleon himself. Each and all are the puppets of the blind, senseless, Immanent Will, the

Will that wills above the will of each,
Yet but the will of all conjunctively.

It matters not that of all the characters, named and nameless, in the drama Napoleon alone is conscious of being a puppet in the control of that Will. Of the rest, each one contributes his share without knowing it; and each one, therefore, by a strange perversion, as it might seem, wins dignity and being, not their opposites.

It was natural, perhaps—it was certainly pardonable—to protest, earlier in our acquaintance with *The Dynasts*, that dramatic interest, human interest, was likely to suffer from that apparently deadening notion of the blind, senseless, purposeless force ruling these men and kingdoms. It was not so clear then as it is now that this philosophic notion was to be the great bond of unity between all the myriad scenes and persons of the drama. Moreover, in this last volume, more completely than in its predecessor, Mr. Hardy has answered that objection in another way. Not only are the doings more exciting—that was only to be expected as the drama drew to a close and we came to Moscow, Leipzig, Elba, and Waterloo; the pity and the horror and the humour of those doings are more concentrated and more clearly exhibited. The little scene of the French flight after Vitoria, racily droll; Napoleon at Fontainebleau after Leipzig; the Prince of Wales worried by the Princess at the opera; the women's camp near Waterloo—all are full of that firm and vivid truth of poor humanity which has long been associated with the name of Thomas Hardy. And of all the written descriptions and pictures of the retreat from Moscow is there one that contains anything so tremendous as this little passage?—

Angel I.

Harassed, it treads the trail by which it came,
To Borodino, field of bloodshot fame,
Whence stare unburied horrors beyond name!

Angel II.

And so and thus it nears Smolensko's walls,
And, stayed its hunger, starts anew its crawls,
Till floats down one white morsel, which appals.

What has floated down from the sky upon the Army is a flake of snow.

The characterization, too, is wonderfully distinct for a drama in which the men and women speak only in snatches and are scarcely described at all. When Mr. Bernard Shaw wishes his readers to understand a character, he prints his history, his appearance, and his views on life in a stage-direction. Mr. Hardy does not; yet, if we wished to pick a character in the drama whose personal flavour and ways are not absolutely clear, we could only hit on Napoleon. True, we see Napoleon taking snuff and sipping grog, Napoleon when *pituita molesta est*, Napoleon humming tunes; but not even Mr. Hardy has succeeded in seeing Napoleon without, as well as with, his destiny and catching him as a mere man. But with the others the case is different. There are, of course, thanks to the form the author has adopted, a score of people, generals, *aides*, and others, who must depend upon their relation to the Immanent Will for their identity; but Wellington is no figurehead, no *portrait d'apparat*, and Pitton, Marie Louise, all the persons for whom space allowed and dramatic need demanded character, even down to the nameless mother of a nameless girl who fell in love at the Duchess of Brunswick's ball, and the Vicar of Durnover who has only to speak twice and to spit twice, are as roundly human as could be. There is one unquotable remark of Wellington's after Vittoria which seems to bring the whole man before us in a flash; and what of a little touch like this?

Wellington goes in the direction of the hussars with Uxbridge. A cannon-shot hisses past.

Uxbridge (*starting*).

I have lost my leg, by God!

Wellington.

By God, and have you! I felt the wind o' the shot.

Could any two lines give us so much of Wellington and of war? These men may be the puppets of the Immanent Will, but they are men for all that, and their joys and sorrows rouse our sympathy none the less because the Will is purposeless. Mr. Hardy is justified. At the same time, it is interesting to note that he makes things as easy as possible for those to whom the Immanent Will is a nightmare. He may jeer with the Spirit Ironic; with the Spirit of the Years he may be coldly impartial; but the Pities have the last word. Through them, all along, we have suffered with the sufferers: with them we are encouraged—or, at least, allowed—to hope.

But—a stirring thrills the air
Like the sounds of joyance there
That the rages
Of the ages
Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashions all things fair!

So ends *The Dynasts*; and whether the author—the Immanent Hardy—agrees with the Pities or not, we are profoundly grateful to the dramatist who chooses that note—the only tolerable, the inevitably right note—on which to close his great work of art.

The Athenaeum
May 16th 1908

The Dynasts: a Drama in Three Parts. By Thomas Hardy. Part Third. (Macmillan & Co.)

Now that Mr. Hardy has carried out his ambitious design, it is easily seen that his instinct was right when he brushed aside the remonstrances of his critics and admirers, and persisted with his plan of making the Napoleonic era the subject of a vast puppet show. Those who discouraged his enterprise, and wished instead for another 'Tess' or 'Jude the Obscure,' must own to-day that had this world-drama of 'The Dynasts' remained an unrealized dream or a fragment, they would have missed a manifestation of its author's mind and talent which is a singularly impressive work of art. Intimations of his mournful creed are scattered through the novels; no one, for instance, can read such a book as 'The Return of the Native' without suspecting that he is in the presence of a confirmed pessimist, or without feeling that for the writer the forces of Nature are no less essential characters of his tale than its men and women, and that behind their seeming violences and caprices is the purpose of an inscrutable Will. Hitherto, however, Mr. Hardy's thoughts about his race have been revealed more or less unconsciously. In 'The Dynasts' his gospel of despair is boldly and deliberately avowed, and forms, as it were, the atmosphere of his tragedy. This increase of self-expression involves no decrease of architectonic skill. A drama covering the career of Napoleon was bound to range over an enormous field; yet never has Mr. Hardy's constructive genius mastered so completely as in his latest work difficulties arising from mass of material.

The apparatus he employs in connexion with this wonderful series of dissolving views is decidedly original. He is fond of transporting his readers to heights in the air whence they can look down on the features of countries and the marches of armies like so many Gullivers surveying the agitations of Lilliput. He makes use, too, of sundry supernatural characters—Recording Angels and Spirits Ironic and Sinister, Spirits of the Pities and Spirits of the Years—to comment aloud in choric fashion on the pranks of his puppets. He has a way even of turning X-rays, so to speak, upon his stage crowds to show "films or brain-tissues of the Immanent Will" pervading them all, and influencing them to achieve its blind purposes. This machinery is serviceable so far as it affords us bird's-eye glances at battles and campaigns and the movements of huge military forces—in so far as it spreads out beneath our feet a relief map of that arena of Europe on which the drama of Napoleon's life was played. It has its disadvantages in that the author often keeps us too far away from the actors to allow of our regarding them as fellow creatures, and also exacts from us an almost impossible attitude of neutrality.

But not even Mr. Hardy can keep up the pose of aloofness which he demands from the student of his play. By degrees the philosopher thaws into the sympathetic observer, the pessimist gives place to the indignant humanist; and except when his choruses express the hopeless litany of fatalism, his scenes grow warm with natural emotion. Each passage is happily selected to contribute its share to the general plan; each is a miniature drama in itself, with its own plot and climax; and it is only the stage directions, as a rule, that remind the spectator that he is "sitting up aloft." At the end of the drama the author tries to set all his scenes in proper focus, and to relate them to eternity—exhibits all the fret and fuss of the Napoleonic pageant as a wrinkle on the face of Time, and Bonaparte himself as but a plaything in the hands of the Immortals. Fortunately Mr. Hardy cannot long deal with human nature without forgetting his theories in his sense of kinship. So, though he may show us from some point in mid-air the Grand Army crawling, "like a dun-piled caterpillar," back in shame and disintegration from Moscow, he takes us close enough to see all the horrors of that retreat—its episodes of gallant soldiers abandoned, and driven mad by hunger and frost on the plains of Lithuania. If, again, we watch from the clouds big moves in the game of war, such as the Peninsular campaign, we are permitted to descend and sit by the death-bed of Josephine, and are given in that scene poetry of an exceeding poignancy. Lastly, while Mr. Hardy can conjure before us in their due proportions the manœuvres and mutations of the struggle at Waterloo, he allows himself to turn aside from the clash of battle and present a delightful picture of old-world Wessex in which "Boney" is burnt in effigy.

The blank verse of the play is not remarkable; it is of the facile, jog-trot sort, and some indication of its quality is afforded by the fact that it is employed to paraphrase a debate in the House of Commons. Once, however, in this last volume it rises to heights of eloquence and pathos—in the speech put into the mouth of the dying Empress Josephine, as the following passage may prove:—

Yes.....glad am I
I saw that child of theirs, though only once.
But—there was not full truth—not quite, I fear!—
In what I told the Emperor that day
He led him in to me at Bagatelle,
That was the happiest moment of my life.
I ought not to have said it. No! Forsooth
My feeling had too, too much gall in it
To let truth shape like that!—I also said
That when my arms were round him I forgot
That I was not his mother. So spoke I,
But oh, me—I remembered it too well!—
He was a lovely child; in his fond prate
His father's voice was eloquent. One might say
Well am I punished for my sins against him!

Otherwise it is in the lyrical snatches—in the Wessex girl's song, for instance, "My love 's gone a-fighting"—that Mr. Hardy's muse is happiest. Such things as that remind us that it is not only by the wide sweep of his imagination, but also by the occasional capacity he evinces for giving perfect expression to a mood, that the author of 'The Dynasts' may claim to be a poet.

The Morning Leader
Feb. 14th 1908

THE MAN OF DESTINY.

MR. HARDY'S "DYNASTS."

The third and concluding volume of Mr. Hardy's singular "drama in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes," brings events down to Waterloo and the fall of Napoleon. The seven acts in the volume cover Moscow, Vittoria, Leipzig, the Abdication, the Return, Quatre Bras and Brussels, and Waterloo itself. It is war, real war, almost throughout—"my burnt-out hour," Bonaparte is made to say at the end of it:

Great men are meteors that consume themselves
To light the earth.

The man of Destiny has shaken the world, but the Dynasts are too strong for him: the "Chorus of the Years" points the moral:

The Battle of the Nations now is closing,
And all is lost to One, to many gained;
The old dynastic routine reimposing,
The new dynastic structure unsustained.

"Which is the better?" is asked—"the so-called ancient order, or that the red-breath'd war-horse prance unreined?" "The Dynasts" really leaves the question unanswered. Mr. Hardy ought to call his poem an epic, not a drama: he means it to be, apparently, a detached fragment of the working of the Universal Will—a drama, in the strict sense: but the impression he produces is that of an epic—of vast happenings with a single extraordinary motive stringing them together. The Will goes on—it has not the "beginning, middle, and end" of the dramatic conventions.

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The machinery of this final instalment is the same as in the two previous volumes. Countless real characters play historical parts. Some imaginary rustics (we could wish for more) occasionally give terribly realistic "comic relief." Throughout the action move the "phantom intelligences"—Spirits Sinister and Ironic, Spirit of the Pities, and the rest. Ever and again a sort of stage direction takes us beyond dramatic representation to the larger view: we are bidden see

like breezes made visible, the films or brain-tissues of the Immanent Will, that pervade all things. . . . moving them to its inexplicable artistries.

We are "endowed with enlarged powers of audition as of vision," or, "as it were, caught up on high." The verse itself is often rugged and harsh, but no less often majestic: it contains a thousand idiosyncrasies and contrasts: Wellington, for instance, on one page, says very naturally:

By God, Fitzroy, if we shan't do it now!

On the next, he is in this Hercules vein:

. . . Mindless that thereby
His wing and centre's mutual maintenance
Is severed by a yawning vacancy.

But it is not in its details that "The Dynasts" is so remarkable, unusual though they are. Nothing like it exists in our literature: the form is wholly new, and perhaps will not provoke imitation. There are many obvious defects, and obvious openings for adverse criticism. But, now that we have read the whole poem, we find ourselves confronted by the fact that Mr. Hardy has impressed us deeply. He shows an enormous, unwieldy picture, but he does not fail to convey its immensity. He gives us, in short, that very sense of destiny which Napoleon and his career inspire.

"The Dynasts. Part Third." By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.

The Star
Feb. 29th 1908

"The Dynasts."

When wrong, own up. That is a good motto for critics as well as other men. I am one of the few critics who do not profess to be infallible. Indeed, I glory in the fact that I make mistakes, change my mind, revise my judgment, and rectify my errors. Criticism is an affair of moods, and I scornfully refuse to be bound to-day to the mood of yesterday. My mood to-day may be worse or it may be better. My opinion to-day may be more sagacious or it may be less sagacious. But, whatever it may be, I think it is the business of the critic to express his mood, although the heavens of Fleet-st. should fall and the enemy blaspheme. Let me say, then, without any violent immodesty, that I have changed my mind about Mr. Thomas Hardy's epic of ironic poetry—"The Dynasts" (Macmillan and Co.).

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When I read the first volume of "The Dynasts" I was irritated and angered by its apparent rudeness and roughness of style. I attribute its savage clumsiness of metre to the fact that Mr. Hardy, all his life long, has been an artist in prose, and that therefore it was absolutely impossible for him, in the afternoon of his genius, to master another vehicle. I am afraid I was somewhat servile to convention in taking this view, for convention holds that a man who has spent his life in doing one thing ought to be severely punished if he attempts to do another thing. I am sure this is a fallacy, for art is not a trade, and a man of genius can learn the verbal tricks of prose and poetry with extreme rapidity. I confess I formerly over-estimated the difficulty of learning these tricks, because I forgot that a man of genius is a law unto himself, and that the rules which bind mediocrities do not apply to him. There is no doubt that Mr. Hardy is a man of genius. In "The Dynasts" he has done what only a man of genius could do—to wit, made a new artistic form—and he has made it by the sheer fury and violence of his unconquerable imagination. After reading the third and last volume of "The Dynasts," I have come to the conclusion that, as a whole, this wonderful epic must be placed beside the great epics of the world. This is an audacious verdict, and the apostles of poetic form will challenge it; but I am convinced that there is a unity of strong imagination in the poem which fans it into a fiery glow that burns up all minor flaws of style.

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Further, it must be said that the style of the poem rises continually out of the plain, terse narrative in magnificent flights of imaginative pathos, imaginative pity, imaginative humor, imaginative mockery, and imaginative irony. The vital pressure of imagination is felt on every page throbbing like the engine of a motor-car, making one's pulses leap with exulting exhilaration. I feel that this man is not only master of himself but that he is also master of life, and master of "whatever gods may be." He confronts the universe with an indomitable vision that never flinches or falters. He sees humanity in its relation to the cosmos as a thing made of tears and laughter, tragedy, comedy, and farce. He allows all the dreams and all the yearnings and all the aspirations of men to rain upon his soul, but he is not deluded by them. He knows the difference between Napoleon and the meanest private in his army is not greater than the difference between a tiger and a midge. He knows that the strugglings and strivings of mortals are merely a part of the broad jest which shines in the sun and the stars, thunders in the avalanche, babbles in the stream, lisps in the leaves, and cries in the heart of man.

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Mr. Hardy has found no key to unlock the gate of ivory, the gate of pearl, or the gate of horn. Like Mr. Bernard Shaw, he falls back upon an obscure philosophic conception based upon the belief that everything is being worked by some unknown energy. Mr. Shaw calls this energy the Life-force. Mr. Hardy calls it the Immanent Will. Christians call it God. Matthew Arnold called it the Stream of Tendency and the Something Not Ourselves which makes for Righteousness. The Greeks call it Fate. Mr. Watts-Dunton calls it "The Jester, Circumstance." Every man of genius has his own name for this Unknown.

Ironic pessimism, however, is not Mr. Hardy's last word. He gives optimism the benefit of the doubt, and his epic ends with a faint wail of hope.

What is the precise difference between this intellectual hope and the spiritual hope of Christianity? It seems to me that it is purely a verbal difference. Christianity fixes its gaze on God, upon an incarnation of its dreams, upon what Mr. Hardy calls "the Will" made flesh. It is simply the difference between the word He and the word It. I confess it is consoling and comforting to find that a man like Mr. Hardy should have the courage or the cowardice to close his human epic upon a note of hope.

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Some of the finest things in the poem are the broad, humorous portraits of common soldiers and common men. Napoleon is superbly drawn, but there is a richer flavor in such figures as Sergeant Young and the Vicar of Durnover, who "spits perpendicularly" and swears. Here is Sergeant Young's song about the Budmouth Dears:—

When we lay where Budmouth Beach is,
O, the girls were fresh as peaches,
With their tall and tossing figures and their eyes of blue and brown!
And our hearts would ache with longing
As we paced from our sing-songing,
With a smart Clink! Clink! up the Esplanade and down.

They distracted and delayed us
By the pleasant pranks they played us,
And what marvel, then, if troopers, even of regiments of renown,
On whom flashed those eyes divine, O,
Should forget the countersign, O,
As we tore Clink! Clink! back to camp above the town.

Do they miss us much, I wonder,
Now that war has swept us sunder,
And we roam from where the faces smile to where the faces frown!
And no more behold the features
Of the fair fantastic creatures,
And no more Clink! Clink past the parlours of the town!

"Shall we once again there meet them!
Risk a fond attempt to greet them!
Will the gay sling-jacket glow again beside the muslin gown!
Will they archly quiz and con us
With a sideway glance upon us,
While our spurs Clink! Clink! up the Esplanade and down!

Altogether "The Dynasts" must be firmly thrust into the bookshelf not far from Homer, Dante, Shakespeare, and Goethe, with the author of "Peer Gynt" hard by.

JAMES DOUGLAS.

and impress the memory. He performs this feat in some eighty small pages and some fifteen thousand words. The first and last of his six short chapters he devotes to epitomising the latest surmises as to the origin of American peoples and religions, and the question of foreign influence on the latter. It is supposed that America was once united to Europe by land, of which Iceland and the Faro Islands are the remains. By this isthmus, it is likely that our remotest ancestors, the Proto-Europeans, migrated into America. It is possible that the "Skraellings," found in North America by the Norsemen in the tenth century, may have been the least mixed descendants of these first settlers from Europe. Similarly and more probably, Proto-Mongolians migrated by way of the Behring Strait. The variety of shapes in the crania of the Amerinds (American-Indians) shows that they were evolved from races of more than one type the Proto-Mongolian being the largest element. The Red man would, therefore, be the development of the Yellow man before he became Mongolian, with some admixture of the White man before he became European. By the time of the second discovery of North America, no race resembling "Skraellings" remained, and the type of the Red man had become mainly Mongolian. But the rapid approximation of Europeans to the Amerind type, which is taking place before our eyes, may point to an apparent rather than real disappearance of the Proto-European element, which was evident in the "Skraellings." As regards the Mexican and Peruvian races in particular, at the time of the second discovery of America, both were, in their own countries, later races, which had imposed themselves by conquest on earlier, advanced civilisations, in the case of the Mexicans, only some four hundred years before the arrival of Columbus. Both countries also were at that time expecting the speedy fulfilment of legends which promised the arrival of a beneficent race, which should be white and bearded. In Mexico, the influence of the white-clad priests of Quetzalcoatl, a deity probably adopted from the earlier inhabitants by their Aztec and Toltec conquerors, no doubt procured the friendly reception of the Spaniards. In the mythology and religion of both countries, there is very little trace of elements extraneous to America, though it is just possible that Buddhist priests from Cabul, according to the Chinese annals, visited those parts of America in the fifth century. Such influence would, of course, be traceable in the milder religion of Peru and the cult of Quetzalcoatl in Mexico, and not in the sanguinary rites peculiar to the Aztecs. The stories of Celtic visits—that of St. Brandan from Ireland, and that of Prince Madoc from Wales in the year 1170—have scarcely obtained any historical confirmation. We confine our remarks mainly to these less interesting chapters of Mr. Spence's book, because something of the more interesting rites of both countries is well known through Prescott, whose works have been brought up to date by copious notes in recent editions easily obtainable. We desire rather, in the small space left us, to notice a few of the clear and pertinent comments of Mr. Spence. He differentiates admirably between Totemism and Naturalism. "Naturalism is the worship of some natural phenomenon," whether it be the sun, or some animal, or plant. The religion of the Peruvians was much more naturalistic in this sense than that of the Mexicans. It was as naturalism, that the late Professor Max Müller and his companions attempted to explain all religions, and, in our estimation, threw no light on any. We welcome Mr. Spence's impatience at a school which seemed to us, even in our early youth, full of dull charlatanism, and we now hope is fast disappearing. Totemism is the belief in blood-kinship of a family or tribe with an animal or plant, originally adopted as a symbol. The origin of the worship of Huitzilopochtli ("the humming-bird on the left") was, Mr. Spence considers with great likelihood, partly totemic. That god was the Ares of the Aztecs, and their peculiar tribal deity. Totemism probably existed once among the Peruvians, but there is little trace of it by the time of the arrival of the Spaniards. Mr. Spence also notices the absolutely theocratic nature of the empire of Peru:

> The Inca was the direct representative of the sun upon earth. He was the very keystone of a socio-religious edifice, to equal which, in intricacy of design and organisation, the entire history of man has no parallel to offer.
>
> All crime was a direct offence against the majesty of the Inca, who, as viceroy of the Sun on earth, had been blasphemed by the breaking of his law.

Mr. Spence also notices that behind and above the theocracy of Peru, and the polytheism of both countries, celebrated as it was in Mexico by atrocious ritual massacres, was the idea of One Supreme Being, to Whom appeal was made, especially in the rites of confession and absolution. The many gods were but, as it were, the personification of His attributes. Mr. Spence is of those who hold that "the knowledge of that power is inalienable from the mind of man." He notices also that the sacrifices of the Mexicans were probably, and in some cases certainly, offered, not to appease the gods, but to nourish them. A possible parallel occurs to us in those curious texts of the Mosaic law and prophecies, which refer to the "food" (*pabulum*) and the "table" (*mensa*) of the Lord; and more certainly in the narrative of Bel and the Dragon.

Finally, we may for once disagree with Mr. Spence, for he finds it

> difficult to believe that a people so imbrued [as were the Mexicans] in a religion of bloodshed could have been punctilious in matters of morality. It seems certain, however, that as a race [they] were austerely moral, pious, truth-loving, and loyal as citizens, and even the sanguinary priests do not appear to have reaped any benefit from their terrible offices.

We are not surprised, for such complete possession by Moloch seems to imply the exclusion of softer daemons.

MR. HARDY'S DRAMA

The Dynasts. A Drama. By THOMAS HARDY. Vol. 3. (Macmillan, 4s. 6d. net.)

IT would be a brilliant thing to say that Mr. Hardy's "Dynasts" is too philosophical to be good drama, and too dramatic to be sound philosophy; but unfortunately it would be untrue. The really true and candid thing to say is, we fancy, that the work is so extraordinary in aim and energy and scope that we are almost baffled in attempting to comprehend it. But it has—most clearly it has—the one quality which could make so large and various a thing coherently vital; it has philosophical unity.

There are, of course, many people who read Mr. Hardy's novels only for the story; there are some few, doubtless, who read them only for their expression of the modern questioning mind at its highest; and there are others, far less numerous (we fear) than the former, but more considerable (we hope) than the latter, who read them as they read *Romeo and Juliet*, as they read of aught noble and profound in prose or verse

> Presenting Thebes or Pelops' line,
> Or the tale of Troy divine.

So the publication of the first volume of this work was an arresting event. The author's deep interest in the Napoleonic period, and his acquaintance with men who bore their part in the burden of that great day, these are known to the readers of the Wessex novels. Those loud years of strife and menace form a background for the novelist's imaginative operations, as they do in many of Balzac's novels. In a drama of Napoleon, then, we said . . . .

And again: Who among those who hold the true faith of the treasurableness and inspiration of the English Turgenev could fail to look with keen expectation for the work wherein a vaster theme and vaster events should be the medium of his imaginative activity? The novels have declared so powerful a dramatic force, so sure a sense of dramatic "inevitableness" (to use a cumbrous phrase) that we have looked somewhat urgently for the completion of the promised trilogy. And lastly, we have wondered whether, in spite of his plain dramatic sense, the master of

the noisome terror and grossness and insanity of war.

"The winter is more merciless, and snow continues to fall

irony would not find himself trammelled in his larger scheme by the limits of his ironic perception. Would not the ironeist defeat the dramatist?

At least, we remembered, Mr. Hardy had never been delicately careful of the weed Reputation; he had not hesitated to follow the long series of prose fiction with two volumes of short poems—receiving what thankful welcome from true lovers of true poetry is already known.

Nothing in the "Dynasts," then—and we mean it as the highest tribute—has greatly surprised us; our doubts are dissipated. There are a hundred fine things in it that we should like to mention. There is the singular gnomic force which Mr. Hardy expresses sometimes more clearly in his verse than in his prose. There is the old sense of sardonic laughter somewhere just behind yon cloud or flower, within this lichened rock, in the sunlight frayed from that line of tossing bayonets. There is, as always in his profoundest work, keen sense of:

> The heavy and the weary weight
> Of all this unintelligible World.

And there are a hundred fine, bright, natural things; dialogue as sharp and volleying as any to be found where quick-minded men meet, rustic humour as rich as—well, as Mr. Hardy's best, for more we cannot say; songs that have surely been overheard, so rightly sung are they. . . . . Does the reader remember this from the first volume?—

> In the wild October night-time, when the wind raved round the land,
> And the Back-sea met the Front-sea, and our doors were blocked with sand,
> And we heard the drub of Dead-man's Bay, where bones of thousands are,
> We knew not what the day had done for us at Trafalgar.
> All) Had done
> Had done
> For us at Trafalgar!

The new volume contains another, sung by a Peninsula Sergeant:

> When we lay where Budmouth Beach is
> O, the girls were fresh as peaches,
> With their tall and tossing figures and their eyes of blue and brown!
> And our hearts would ache with longing
> As we passed from our sing-songing,
> With a smart *Clink! Clink!* up the Esplanade and down.

These clearly are the work of the author of "Valenciennes" and the other fine "songs of action" in "Wessex Poems."

This trilogy, however, has more notable qualities. True it is bare of ornament: you will find no mere rhetoric permitted for rhetoric's sake; you will rather perceive a noble austerity and disparagement of unessential felicities. You must even be prepared for a certain harshness of verse, sign of an imperfect mastery of the medium, though it is strange how insignificant this defect appears in the whole drama, especially in the blank-verse parts, which are grave and weighty, often mightily kindling with the living fire. Outweighing every defect, however, there is a singular comprehensive power and clarity of imagination in the vast views which the author commands by a single phrase; as when you look with him from a remote lofty eye-station upon "four groups of moth-like transport ships silently skimming the wide liquid plain;" or, when, in the simple description of a linking "dumb show," he unfolds the immense panorama of conflict as a mere "see-saw," noting characteristically how close by a little stream "continues to trickle unconcernedly to sea." More plainly still is this power manifest in the brief vivid descriptions of the great campaigns; and, perhaps, the best instance is to be found in the splendid and lurid confusion of the Waterloo scenes, with their powerful suggestion of the flinging gambler's fury and failure, and the sombre disenchantment following strife.

We may say all this, and more, without approaching the vital point—that is, Mr. Hardy's own attitude. It is, we take it, plain that he has not written three volumes simply in order to give us vivid pictures of crowded campaigns or a clear and sympathetic characterisation of Napoleon the Conqueror; though these things he assuredly has done. Beyond all this he gives us what is more valuable than thirty volumes of vivid pictures; he gives us a philosophical conception of the vast era, and suggests an interpretation of its national movements—indeed, of human progress itself. Here is the great theme. A finer background he could hardly have chosen, nor one more certain of appeal to thoughtful English readers. The Napoleonic spirit is not dead; its mouthpieces change and pass, thinking they stand for themselves. Mr. Hardy tells us that Napoleon did not stand for himself only, nor for France only; he stood, as we may conceive, for man insurgent, awhile dominant, teased with glory, exposed, smothered. Mr. Hardy spares us the hateful gibe of supposing that lives vanished like smoke and tears fell like rain merely for the aggrandisement of an inordinately ambitious soldier. There is a Hand behind the Show; but is that Hand moved blindly, or does it only seem to move blindly because beyond our comprehension? We are like children who, coming as we think to an irresponsible, hearty pantomime, are suddenly confronted with the *Electra* or *The Trojan Women*. Puppets still, of pantomime or tragedy, are the dim figures on the distant dwarfed stage. But what of the Hand, the Brain behind?

It is with the answer to such obstinate questionings that the development of this profound drama is concerned. The suggestion of the activity of what Mr. Hardy calls the Immanent Will is repeated throughout by Spirits of the Pities and Ironies, the Spirit Sinister, and the Spirit of the Years; a Will hinted and glimpsed, distrusted, and finally praised. The pervading idea of the Immanent Will informing the affairs of an infinitesimal world gives unity to the survey thereof. It does more—it affords a persistent clue to the meaning of the mystery of the heaving, bloody earth, that else were merely grotesque and grim. It is the Immanent Will,

> The purposive, unmotived, dominant Thing
> Which sways in brooding dark men's wayfaring!

The Spirit of the Pities, interpreting the motions of the all but inscrutable, discerns:

> Yet is it but Napoleon who has failed;
> The pale pathetic peoples still plod on
> Through hoodwinkings to light.

Napoleon himself perceives, as in a glass darkly, the Moving Finger writing:

> I have ever known
> That such a Will I passively obeyed!

but he, supreme Egoist, does not perceive that it is more than his own fate that is written, more than the fate of a dynasty; to him the writing is indecipherable. For the vaster issues of the spinning world's destiny are suggested. Brooding over the expiring frenzy of Waterloo, the Ironic Spirits determine of the Immanent Will . . . .

> A fixed foresightless dream
> Is Its whole philosopheme.

But Mr. Hardy does not end with this. The illumination of the Will itself is indicated, and the consequent redemption of the illimitable failure of the world. There is an After Scene in which the author's conception reaches full height. The Spirit of the Years speaks of the "Great Foresightless" weaving its "ceaseless artistries in Circumstance;" of which "but one flimsy ribbon" is all that they have watched. The Pities sing the Will Beneficent:

> Who hadst not shaped such souls as we
> If tender mercy lacked in Thee!

And following the still sombre questionings of the Spirit of the Years and the Spirit Ironic, sounds the final chorus:

> But a stirring thrills the air
> Like to sounds of joyance there,
> That the rages
> Of the ages
> Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
> Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair

Is it only years that have passed since Mr. Hardy wrote the great and hopeless chapters of "Tess" and "Jude the Obscure"? However that be, we are happy to have the completion of a work wherein a great theme is developed in the great manner of which only a mature and powerful genius is capable. And thankful as we are to the author for the vital energy and fine distinction of his drama, we are yet more thankful for the profound conception by which it is illuminated and unified—conception of a finer and loftier wisdom than any discovered by the noblest of of his prose writings.

The Bookman
June 1908

THE DYNASTS.*

"The Dynasts, a Drama of the Napoleonic Wars, in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes." So runs Mr. Hardy's simple and austere title; but whose are the voices that faintly re-echo on one's ear at its recital—the Spirits' Ironic, or the Spirits' of the Pities? There is something so magnificent, so formidable, and so arrogant in the conception of such a work that its full accomplishment falls almost as an anti-climax. "Miracles don't happen," is the first cry; "It is done!—yet still, man is but grass," the second. There could scarcely be a greater triumph for its author than this irrefutable conviction of his own point of view. And yet, in spite of the vastness of its scheme, its slow undeviating advance, its indifference; there, behind its perfect impersonality, haunting the whole drama, is the presence of an imagination and courage so childlike and uncontaminated that the briefest of his lyrical poems is not more essentially the author, than this great scheme of "The Dynasts." For, after all, this pessimism, or whatever other name one may choose to slander it by, is simply another refuge of blessed nakedness. To surrender, to sacrifice everything, even hope, even self, even beauty, in order to catch fast Truth, though only during one of her myriad transformations, is the sole aim worthy of a philosopher. And Truth will always reward her pursuer—if only by continuing to run away. Even the most cheery and wanton of optimists alive could scarcely help admiring Mr. Hardy's marvellous presentation of his theme. It is the accumulative evidence of these transient men and women, from Napoleon down to the dullest of his victims, from Nelson to the "fourth" or "fifth gentleman" of any city in Europe, that tells at last so overwhelmingly. All are human, wilful, capricious, quite eminently "masters of their fate"; much more the peasants and camp-followers—subtlest of thrusts—than Emperor and Prince Regent. All, too, how profoundly are mere puppets, motes of chance, the flitting phosphorescence of a wave that follows the moon. The temptation to dwell on this pervasive idea is irresistible. But when one turns from it to criticise, how vain seems the hope of expressing anything but the critic's forlorn incompetence! If only he possessed a fraction of the sheer dogged erudition manifest in Mr. Hardy's work, he might enthusiastically pin down a fact, refute an inference. If only he had a fraction of the author's imagination, his vision, his intense and passionate "indifference," his beautiful pity and tenderness, he might hope to prove how richly, almost incomparably, these gifts are his. And his English, his style—

many a stone has been flung at the blank verse; yet does not this very verse seem by some diabolical ingenuity to reveal all the sawdust that went to stuff that monstrous zany of the fates, Napoleon; all the wooden-jointedness of your busy politician; the queer insensitive courage of a soldier; all the blocks and pulleys, the tinsel and limelight of the show which is life, and on which Death's deep starlessness falls; the curtain down, the puppets boxed, the Master asleep? It is unamiable, uncouth, obstinate, crooked verse; and yet strangely rich and charged and graphic it can be—like ore ashimmer with metal.

It is in the scenery, the stage directions, the songs, that we catch glimpses of the Hardy of "The Woodlanders," of "Tess" and of the Poems. The figures of countrymen, deserters, servants and sailors, and so on, live with that extraordinary still, meaningful sense of reality which only occasional and vivid memories and dreams have the power of evoking in most men. They are created. They will live as easily and clearly—laugh, jest, scoff, love, jilt and die—ten thousand years hence, just as they do now. It is the supreme gift of genius. The lightness of life, its *insouciance*, its heedlessness, beauty, gaiety, gallantry, youth, stream through these pages foiled with piercing vividness by the noisome terror and grossness and insanity of war.

"The winter is more merciless, and snow continues to fall upon a deserted expanse of unenclosed land in Lithuania. Some scattered birch-bushes merge in a forest in the background.

"It is growing dark, though nothing distinguishes where the sun sets. There is no sound except that of a shuffling of feet in the direction of a bivouac. Here are gathered tattered men like skeletons. Their noses and ears are frostbitten, and pus is oozing from their eyes.

"These stricken shades in a limbo of gloom are among the last survivors of the French army. Few of them carry arms. One squad, ploughing through snow above their knees, and with icicles dangling from their hair that clink like glass-lustres as they walk, go into the birch-wood, and are heard chopping. . . .

"*Russian Officer.* Prince, here's a curious picture. They are dead.

"*Kutúzof* (with indifference). Oh, naturally. After the snow was down
I marked a sharpening of the air last night.
We shall be stumbling on such frost-baked meats
Most of the way to Wilna.

"*Officer* (examining the bodies). They all sit
As they were living still, but stiff as horns;
And even the colour has not left their cheeks,
Whereon the tears remain in strings of ice.—

It was a marvel they were not consumed:
Their clothes are cindered by the fire in front,
While at their back the frost has caked them hard.

"*Kutúzof.* 'Tis well. So perish Russia's enemies!"

How futile seems criticism of work like this. How shallow praise. Or take just his random people of every day:

"*Fourth Woman* (to a little girl). Now, my dear, come and help me with this one (she goes with the girl to a soldier in red with green facings who lies some distance off). Ah! 'tis no good. He's gone.

"*Girl.* No, mother. His eyes are wide open, a-staring to get a sight of the battle!

"*Fourth Woman.* That's nothing. Lots of dead ones stare in that silly way. It depends upon where they were hit."

What character, nature, humanity, thought; how tender an irony went to the making of these few lines!

It is curious to reflect on the wonderful chance that after all his fascinating and beautiful novels; after his intensely personal poems—almost Donne-like in their packed phrases—Mr. Hardy should have lived to give the world this supreme work of thought, design, and imagination. Time will set "The Dynasts" in its place, when all our feeble chattering quarrel with our own day has long fallen silent. But what good that may mean, and whose, let the Phantom Intelligences decide.

WALTER DE LA MARE.

The Daily News
Feb. 17th 1908

"THE DYNASTS."

MR. HARDY'S NAPOLEONIC DRAMA.

"The Dynasts." A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. By Thomas Hardy. Part 3. Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.

When Mr. Hardy issued the first volume of his colossal Napoleonic drama he indicated that the completion of the design depended upon the reception it had from the public. The second volume appeared in due course, and the third is now before us. We may assume, therefore, that the experiment, at once so daring, so original, and so vast, was received in a way that justified its completion. It would have been strange, indeed, if it had been otherwise. From the first it was a thing to arouse a sort of astonishment and expectation. Whatever criticism there might be in detail the architecture was of such magnitude, the scheme so arresting, that it could not fail in its appeal to the imagination. The impression left on the mind by the first volume was that of bewilderment. One was overshadowed by the immensity of the conception. One needed the perspective of time and the relation of the parts in order to be able to say whether the structure was of granite or match-boarding. It would be hazardous even yet to offer a decisive verdict. And yet no one closes the book on that note of hope—the most that the philosophy of Hardy can allow—contained in the

cutting from The Daily Graphic

Feb. 14th 1908

THOMAS HARDY'S EPIC.

["The Dynasts: a Drama of the Napoleonic Wars, in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes." By Thomas Hardy. Part III. (Macmillan and Co.) 4s. 6d. net.]

(Reviewed by Alfred Noyes.)

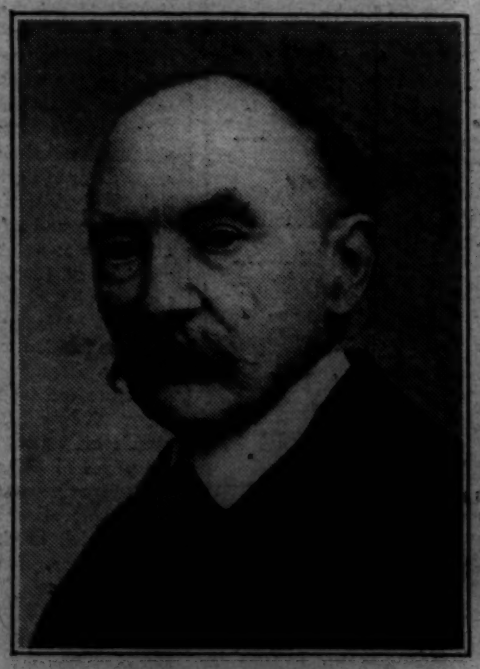
The third and longest part of "The Dynasts," just published, concludes Mr. Hardy's great epic, and crowns it in a manner which might have been hoped for, but hardly expected, even from the hand of so great and practised a master. Those who have rightly read his greatest novels—such as "The Return of the Native"—have always known that he was a great poet—quite independent of the medium in which the gods or the "Immanent Will" might lead him to work. Those who have had the privilege of hearing him speak of his aims know that poetry, moving properly in metre (just as the universe—the tides, the stars, and the human pulses move in metre), lies nearest to his heart. And those who are really abreast of the achievements in poetry during the last fifty years are also aware that Mr. Hardy's poem, "The Darkling Thrush," is a lyric of rugged strength, immortal beauty, and pathos unmatched by any living writer; a lyric fit to be placed beside the best that has ever been done in our great lyrical language; and that is to say one of the finest lyrics in the world. It is a lyric that, read once, may be forgotten. Read three times, it will haunt the reader's memory as long as death and pain retain any meaning for him. We hope it will not be thought impertinent to say that for those who had come to regard Mr. Hardy's mind as something like the wintry landscape in his poem, where "the land's sharp features seemed to be the Century's corpse outleant," the sudden ecstatic song of the "aged thrush, frail, gaunt and small, in blast-beruffled plume," is typical of the divinest quality in that mind, the quality which has made Mr. Hardy turn of late to poetry pure and simple. At any rate, the notes that tremble with some strange hope through the "Chorus of the Pities" at the end of this epic of gloom and blood and world-anguish, speak to something within us—who know Mr. Hardy's wintry landscapes so well—far nearer to the fount of tears than any poet less grimly truthful could approach. We are used to so many finely-coloured poetic lies nowadays that one may clutch with something like passion at the hem of the grey garment of Hope which Mr. Hardy displays passing through that final dream of his Titanic drama.

A Word to the Critics.

When the first two parts of "The Dynasts" appeared, there was a general disposition among critics to "hedge." "The furtive yelp of the masked and writhing poeticule" did not fail, however, to testify to the real greatness of the strange intruder. The method was the usual one of quoting in a few detached lines, like:—

That dignified and pensive gentleman,

and plaintively inquiring if this were poetry, and if Mr. Hardy had not better return to his novels; for Mr. X. and Mr. Y. could both of them show him several tricks of improving verse so blank. These critics, of course, had not only forgotten their Shakespeare and his methods. They had also—and in this case it is more important—forgotten their Goethe; and they were displaying complete ignorance of the first principles of criticism. But with the publication of the third part of "The Dynasts" all such quibbling should cease, and the work should take its place at once as one of the greatest poems of modern times. To begin with, it has, though on a much larger scale, all the great qualities of Mr. Hardy's novels—their structural perfection, their scientific precision and lucidity, their irony, their symbolism, and their extraordinary power of conveying a vast sense of movement, whether of heather on a lonely wind-swept heath, of armies, or of the starry heavens. This third volume begins with Napoleon's disastrous expedition to Moscow, and ends with the battle of Waterloo. We may say at once that anyone reading it rightly will secure a vast panoramic view of the whole of that period. But it must be read consecutively and properly, or the wonder of the work will elude the reader.



Mr. Thomas Hardy.
(Photographed by Elliott and Fry, Baker Street.)

The Poet's Peculiar Powers.

For instance, if one reads, at the end of the first Act, the following dialogue between Napoleon (who has just returned from Moscow) and Marie Louise, one may think the verse very blank indeed:—

Napoleon.
I intend,
Also, to gild the dome of the Invalides
In best gold leaf, and on a novel pattern.

Marie Louise.
To gild the dome, dear? Why?

Napoleon.
To give them things
To think about—. . . So they'll forget
The woes of Moscow.

And when the scene is closed by the announcement of supper the desultory reader may suffer disappointment. Yet, if any properly qualified reader takes the whole Act as it stands, he will begin to think it only possible to a poet who combines in himself the peculiar powers of a Dante, a Goethe, and a Voltaire—with, perhaps, a dash of Gibbon—but with all these powers in perfect unity and harmony. For the scene we have quoted follows immediately on another, of merciless winter in Lithuania, where Napoleon's soldiers are told that their leader has deserted them.

It is growing dark, though nothing distinguishes where the sun sets. There is no sound except that of a shuffling of feet in the direction of a bivouac. Here are gathered tattered men like skeletons. Their noses and ears are frost-bitten, and pus is oozing from their eyes. These stricken shades, in a limbo of gloom, are among the last survivors of the French Army. . . . One squad, ploughing through snow above their knees, and with icicles dangling from their hair that clink like glass-lustres as they walk . . . bring back boughs and contrive to light a fire. With swords they cut rashers from a dead horse, using gunpowder for salt to eat them with. Two others return with a dead rat and some candle-ends. . . .

A straggler enters.

First Soldier (dazed).
What—gone, do you say? Gone?

A scene of despairing madness follows till they are exhausted, and, once more, crouch hopelessly round the fire. In the morning the Russians arrive and find them still sitting there.

Kutuzof.
Go, stir them up. We slay not sleeping men.

Russian Officer.
Prince, here's a curious picture. They are dead.
. . . . They all sit
As they were living still, but stiff as horns;
And even the colour has not left their cheeks,
Whereon the tears remain in strings of ice.
It was a marvel they were not consumed:
Their clothes are cindered by the fire in front,
While at their back the frost has caked them hard.

That scene throws a new light on Napoleon's supper! The poetry of Thomas Hardy is not to be estimated by "quirks and turns." It is altogether a larger matter, and must be judged as we have suggested, by such standards as those of Dante and Goethe. The book is one tremendous and divine intercessory prayer to that which is beyond and no man understands.

ALFRED NOYES.

. . . the surface of the mystery of this unintelligible world." But they do nevertheless embody the author's familiar thought about ultimate things. As the moon sinks and the darkness blots out Napoleon on the fatal night the Spirit of the Years utters its comment on the futility of the greatest, for even the Napoleons of us are

Like meanest insects on obscurest leaves
But incidents and tools of Earth's unfolding;
Or as the beaten rod that stirs the fire
Because it must.

The Napoleonic wars—what are they but one flimsy riband in the web which the Immanent Will weaves in ceaseless artistries of Circumstance—

. . . . web Eporme,
Whose furthest hem and selvage may extend
To where the roars and flashings of the flames
Of earth—invisible suns dwell noisily.

But the human heart cannot surrender itself to the doom of a blind destiny, and the Spirit of the Pities utters the eternal cry of humanity in a noble semi-chorus—

Yea. Great and Good, Thee, Thee we hail
Who shak'st the strong, Who shield'st the frail,
Who had'st not shaped such souls as we
If tender mercy lacked in Thee!
. . . . .
And these pale panting multitudes
Seem surging here, their moils, their moods,
All shall "fulfil their joy" in Thee,
In Thee abide eternally.

But the Spirit of the Years—and in the Spirit of the Years we see the soul of Thomas Hardy—has ceased to dream, for it is the spirit of modern disillusion that speaks in the semi-chorus that follows:

O Immanence, That reasonest not
In putting forth all things begot,
Thou build'st Thy House in space—for what?
O Loveless, Hateless!—past the sense
Of kindly-eyed benevolence,
To what tune danceth this Immanence?

And the Spirit Ironic answers in the quatrains of the Tentmaker—

For one I cannot answer. But I know
'Tis handsome of our Pities so to sing
The praises of the dreaming, dark, dumb Thing
That turns the handle of this idle Show!

But the last word is given to the Pities and it is on the note of human hope that the ethereal drama closes.

The present volume, from the literary point of view, is, perhaps, the finest of the three, though it contains no single thing equal to the great dirge of "Albuera" in the second volume. The versification is often deliberately rough, and the phraseology is sometimes marred by that habit of Mr. Hardy of dragging in some unaccustomed word against its will—

Ah—from your manner it is worse, I see,
Than I cognise.

"Cognise" in such a case is neither prose nor poetry, and its inaptness can be matched almost on any page. Mr. Hardy has not aimed—could not, indeed, aim—at character studies; but we get sudden little pictures of all the great figures of the time, and Napoleon himself emerges a living reality. As drama, the work, with its nineteen acts and 130 scenes, is, of course, impossible for the stage. It is the drama of suggestion to which the reader brings his knowledge to fill in the gaps. Then he may see those fifteen crowded years unrolled before him like a map. And he cannot fail to have a new and living conception of the Napoleonic time—a conception lit up by Mr. Hardy's imaginative grip of events and his astonishing industry in detail. He will literally see as from a hill hard by Waterloo fought again, and he will not find a battalion out of place or an incident out of focus. Whether as philosophy, or history, or drama, "The Dynasts" must rank as a work of genius.

MR. HARDY'S VISION OF NAPOLEON.

THE DYNASTS: a Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. Part iii. By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.

To some, this last volume of *The Dynasts*, like its forerunner, will appear only eccentric and something of an outrage. At one time "the point of vision descends to earth, close to the scene of action," so that we may see the frightful passing of the Beresina river by the remains of Napoleon's ruined army. At another time it is pointed out to the reader that, "endowed with enlarged powers of audition as of vision, we are struck by the mournful taciturnity that prevails" in the shattered columns. And elsewhere, "the beholder finds himself as it were caught up on high, and while the Vauxhall scene still dimly twinkles below, he gazes southward towards Central Europe." Such are the stage-directions of Mr. Hardy's *Dynasts*, already familiar to us from the two volumes that have preceded this third and last. Other unusual dramatic devices are numerous. At one point we see the Austrian declaration of war travelling from Vienna to Napoleon at Dresden—a letter, "huge as a field of snow," "moving like a cloud," seen in this way because it is "sized to its big importance." Throughout the work the "phantom intelligences," the Spirit of the Years, the Pities, the Ironic Spirits, the Spirit of Rumour, the Shade of the Earth, and the rest take up the tale from one another, and describe and discuss what the human characters do not perceive. It is very fanciful and queer; and not seldom the method fails. But it is something—it is much—that Mr. Hardy can, even at odd moments, teach us, as he does teach us, to play the part of an immortal intelligence, and look down upon the huge battle-drama of Europe with a sense of the sublime superhumanity that he purposes to make his reader feel in turning these strange pages. The little voices of men and women, humble and great, seem to float faintly to us at that spiritual altitude to which the poet takes us. Napoleon loses every mark of magnitude. Labouring and brooding among the millions of Europe, he seems only a more energetic and dominant insect, easy to crush with the extended finger of Fate, whose seat we occupy as we read; and soon in any case to die.

Perfect simplicity is the necessary note of such an attempt as this. The dialogue is only sufficiently touched with art to preserve us from the feeling of bathos—and that not always successfully. For instance, we hear Wellington speaking, as he views the field of Salamanca, of Marmont's moving a division

> —mindless that thereby
> His wing and centre's mutual maintenance
> Is severed by a yawning vacancy.

Such passages, which are not rare, are desperately like the blank verse of Mr. Puff's drama of England's other hour of peril. The command of geography and the fund of general information displayed by some of the "phantom intelligences," too, has a decidedly incongruous effect at times. Here necessity is the only plea. If the Spirit of the Years or one of its colleagues does not tell us what the Archduke is doing on the field, or how Schwartzenberg's movement on Probstheida is faring, we shall not hear it from any other source. The truth is, this great attempt of Mr. Hardy's is a take-me-or-leave-me affair. It makes no excuses for itself; it does not argue. Either it hits the reader very hard with all its difficulties and absurdities, or it misses him altogether. It is certain at least that the poet has seen this vision that he would share with us. He has, escaping the toils of the enormous mass of detail in which his study of the period has plainly involved him, hovered above the Napoleonic drama and seen it whole, with all its meaning for the highest intelligence that is in humanity. The final dialogue of the Pities and the Spirit of the Years upon the meaning of it all has been in the mind of the perceptive reader throughout the course of *The Dynasts*. The whole subject has been deliberately selected as food for the poet's grim philosophy of "the Great Foresightless," of "the Inadvertent Mind" in the Divine Power, "mechanising in blank entrancement, now as evermore, its ceaseless artistries in Circumstance." As the Ironic Spirits sing:—

> Of It's doings if It knew
> What It does It would not do . . .
> Are, then, Love and Light its aim—
> Good to praise and Ill to blame?
> Nay; to alter evermore
> Things from what they were before.

But in the pursuit of that subject Mr. Hardy has given us many pictures of rare vitality upon a vast canvas. Such scenes as that of the destruction of the remnant of the Old Guard at Waterloo are of the sort that remains in the mind. It is plain history, even down to the *mot Cambronnesque*—at which "hollow laughter, as from people in hell, comes approvingly from the remnant of the Old Guard." And the last we see of the figure of Napoleon is in the woods of Bossu during the retreat:—

> Great men are meteors that consume themselves
> To light the earth. This is my burnt-out hour.

And of England:—

> She
> Whose tough, enisled, self-centred, kindless craft
> Has tracked me, springed me, thumbed me by the throat,
> And made herself the means of mangling me.

It is the Spirit of the Years that drops the curtain upon the tortured figure:—

> Such men as thou, who wade across the world
> To make an epoch, bless, confuse, appal,
> Are in the elemental ages' chart
> Like meanest insects on obscurest leaves
> But incidents and tools of Earth's unfolding;
> Or as the brazen rod that stirs the fire
> Because it must.

Daily Chronicle, 12 Feb '08

MR. HARDY'S "DYNASTS."

By S. R. Littlewood.

Is it great poetry? Is it practicable drama? Why worry about these needless bewilderments? Whatever it may not be, the arrival of this third and last volume of Mr. Thomas Hardy's vast Napoleonic drama convinces one only the more surely that the whole thing is not merely intensely delightful and illuminating, but a purely natural fruit of the mind of Wessex's man of genius.

Wessex and the World.

After all, those who know Wessex best know that the Napoleonic wars were practically the last event that happened in the world—so far as Wessex is concerned. Commerce, manufactures—even railways—what have they mattered to the real heart of Wessex? Weymouth itself, with those old red houses along the front, is almost as Georgian now as it was when "Farmer Jarge" came trundling down the hill, as described so inimitably in Mr. Hardy's own "Trumpet Major." The last great thing that Wessex men did for England was to fight supremely well at Trafalgar and Waterloo. As we learn from footnotes to these very pages, the echoes of those great deeds have not died out even yet in the Wessex cottage homes.

Is it not natural, then, that the ever-pondering mind of Mr. Hardy should weave this great Napoleonic drama into his dream of Wessex and the world? This granted, the dramatic form is but a logical necessity for so vivid and multitudinous an expression. Anyhow, it is only when one recognises the flower-like naturalness of the growth of "The Dynasts," that one begins to enjoy and value to the full the great work just completed.

Europe at Sight.

Thus, in this Third Part—which deals with the fall of Napoleon, beginning with the setting forth for Moscow and ending with the rout after Waterloo—mere searchers for fine show-poetry will, as in the other volumes, be a little disappointed. There are few purple patches of rhetorical verse—Mr. Hardy was not writing for "sensation." As a matter of fact, by far the best writing—as such—is in the sometimes exquisite prose of the scenic directions, in the racy dialogue of the comedy-scenes, and in the delightful little lyrics that come like the twittering of birds between the roar of cannon and the shouting of captains.

As to the sticklers for stage-possibility, one fancies that for such this would be the most baffling of all the three volumes. With unfettered freedom Mr. Hardy's imagination flits from end to end of Europe. He sojourns with the spirits of the air—the Spirits of Irony, of Pity, and so on—gives us glimpses of a continent through a rift in the clouds, or closets us with Marie Louise in her boudoir. He will ask us to hear what Napoleon and Wellington are saying, though leagues distant, in one and the same scene. His dramatic vision is at once telescopic and microscopic, external and internal. Everything, he explains, is to take its proportionate size in view of the dramatic purpose—whether an army marching over a mountain or a Wessex yokel peering over a hedge. At one time he will ask for a scenic representation of "the films or brain-tissues of the Immanent Will, that pervade all things, ramifying through the army;" at another he will demand a vision of "the electric state of mind animating Wellington, resembling the interior of a beating brain lit by phosphorescence." Anon he suggests that the parchment bearing Napoleon's abdication should be seen in a vision very nearly the size of Europe. One can picture a poor, conscientious stage manager—even with all the biographs and panoramas in the world to help him—panting after these postulates in vain!

A Vision of Waterloo.

Yet if one only leaves conventional poetry and the conventional stage to look after their own capabilities, and if only one settles down to enjoy the book from the natural point of view from which it was written, it is quite amazing how true a drama emerges—how clear, how vivid, how simple yet infinitely varied, how engrossing in its interest, how absolutely one in its message. In a brief review one can, of course, only suggest the charm and spirit of a few of the scenes. Take, for instance, the pair of acts recording the events of the last two days, from the famous ball at Brussels to Napoleon's flight in the dusk from Waterloo. In these wonderful scenes Mr. Hardy makes no very great excursions from familiar history; he attempts no wild bombast of heroic verse. But in his quiet, faithfully descriptive way he suggests the smother and din, the carnage and the courage of that conflict, with a living power that has rarely been equalled either in poetry or prose.

Perhaps the nearest thing to conscious poetising in these last magnificent pages is the Chorus of Rumours, describing the final advance of the Old Guard toward the English cannon, and beginning:

> Twice thirty throats of couchant cannonry,
> Ranked in a hollow curve, to close their [illegible]
> Upon the advancing files—wait silently
> Like to black bulls at gaze.

But the conscious poetry is not half so effective as the quite supreme art of the mere "directions"—telling, for example, how this same Old Guard fought at the last "with hollow laughter, as from people in hell," or making us hear in the midst of the terrific charges of Ney's splendid cavalry "the swish of the horses' breasts through the standing corn" and the snap of the bullets upon their cuirasses "like stones on window panes."

Dorset Dears!

Turning to the lighter passages, in this volume no less than in the others, Wessex finds its due honour in delightful little allusions to local heroes, in richly humorous scraps of Dorset dialogue, and above all in the lyrics, one of which—the Hussar's song [illegible] the "'Budmouth' Girls"—has already been quoted in these columns. Can you resist yet another verse?:

> Shall we once again there meet them?
> Risk a fond attempt to greet them?
> Will the gay sling-jacket glow again beside the muslin gown?
> Will they archly quiz and con us
> With a sideway glance upon us
> While our spurs Clink! Clink! up the esplanade and down?

Or take this as a little outburst from a camp-following woman—a friend of Private Cantle, who came from "Casterbridge," and who could "backslide to anything when his blood was up":

> Bayonets and firelocks!
> I wouldn't my mammy should know't,
> But I've been kissed in a sentry-box,
> Wrapped in a soldier's coat!

This may not be great poetry, but how many literary men of 68 could sit and sing so blithely as that?

Lastly, however, through all these kaleidoscopic scenes of jollity and horror—whether ogling with the Regent at Covent-garden or Vauxhall Gardens, or hearing Wellington give, with a customary "By G—d," his bluff opinion of the Spanish ladies, or debating with Castlereagh in the House of Commons, or viewing the glittering cupolas of unburnt Moscow or the return of Napoleon's army through the Russian snows—through it all Mr. Hardy never loses sight of the profound philosophic purport, before which a blade of Wessex grass is as important as the fate of Europe. "What does it all mean?" he asks, "What Will is it that has guided these myriads of brave men to their doom?" "Thus"—he says of Napoleon's army:

> Thus do the mindless minions of the spell
> In mechanised enchantment sway and show
> A Will that wills above the will of each,
> Yet but the will of all conjunctively,
> A fabric of excitement, web of rage,
> That permeates as one stuff the weltering whole.

Before this Will, Napoleon, "the Man of Destiny," was, Mr. Hardy opines, but an instrument, a "meanest insect in the elemental ages' chart." Yet the Spirits consider him worthy to sing in chorus round his fall some beautiful philosophic lyrics upon this strange Ate—this Immanent Will, that leads men blindly they know not where. The last word, it is pleasant to know, for those who are mindful of the fatalistic shadow that hangs over nearly all Mr. Hardy's novels, is one of hope:

> A Stirring thrills the air
> Like to sounds of joyance there
> That the rages
> Of the [illegible]
> Shall be cancelled, and [illegible]
> from the darts that were,
> Consciousness the Will [illegible]
> all things [illegible]

Pall Mall Gazette March 6th 1908

A MODERN MASTERPIECE.*

When noticing the second volume of "The Dynasts" we compared it with that other work by one of the giants of literary Europe, a work that also deals with the Napoleonic shadow—Tolstoy's "War and Peace." Again, in spite of the differences in form and of philosophy, we are compelled, in reading this dramatic epic, to recall the pages of the Russian novel. It is true that Mr. Hardy's philosophy is the background of his European puppet-show—and his idea of Force is of a hand that pulls the puppets from behind; while with Tolstoy Force is something that works through puppets, and even at times raises them to the dignity of co-operators. Yet the notion of a great prevailing and pervading unity is common to both books; and widely as the two artists differ in their conception of the nature and character of that unity, the perpetual acknowledgment of its presence makes the two books akin. It may be said, with some truth, that Tolstoy did not challenge so gigantic a failure as did Mr. Hardy; and so too the Englishman may be given the credit of an amazing, and incredible, success. The three volumes in which Mr. Hardy presents the great Napoleonic period are not only successful as literature, they are eminently readable. Never perhaps has his faculty for making men and women live with a stroke of the pen been so much in evidence. A casual person, a mad soldier, an English mother, shoved, so to speak, on to his enormous stage for a few minutes, becomes as familiar and as intimate as the people we have lived with, and in the case of his main characters, Napoleon, Wellington, Louise, the same may be said with increased emphasis. Here we have a very real and credible Napoleon—theatrical, it is true, he would not be Bonaparte otherwise: and there may be some truth in the theory that it was because we could laugh at the actor, we could smash the commander. Wellington is also good, though not somehow very happy with his verse speeches. He seems to us to have just the right touch—not too blunt, for, as Mr. Shaw has said, "he could not beat Napoleon without getting into his limelight."

Good as the scenes with the great ones are—notably that of Marie Louise and Napoleon at the end of Act I., we are not sure that we do not prefer Mr. Hardy in the wonderful pages when he gives us the armies, the rank and file, or the country-folk of Casterbridge, or the citizens of Leipzig, or the servants at the Court. But everywhere, whether dealing with high or low, Mr. Hardy shows his power of creating real men and women, and of making distinct and unforgettable pictures.

One of the most remarkable feats of this work is the way in which Mr. Hardy, in spite of his incessant change of scene and persons, manages to keep away any sense of strain in the actual drop from one scene to the other. From Moscow to Vauxhall, from Leipzig to Paris, we are taken without feeling bewildered. This we believe is largely due to the supernatural machinery which seemed one of the most doubtful experiments in the book. Mr. Hardy has made it appear so reasonable and right that the reader is able to watch the Intelligences push about armies and captains on the board of Europe: in fact, Mr. Hardy makes it possible for us to accept the Intelligential perspective, so that all that happens—however distant or apparently detached—falls into the picture.

As to the merits of the volume, as compared with its predecessors, it keeps fully up to the level set by them. We find, as before, some of the blank verse a little crabb'd and difficult; but the lyrics are as real and sincere as before, and the grave choruses of the Intelligences move with an equal grandeur and dignity. The book closes on a note of—what shall we call it? Mr. Hardy gives the Chorus of the Pities the last word, and their last word is this:—

> But a stirring thrills the air
> Like to sounds of joyaunce there
> That the rages
> Of the ages
> Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
> Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair!

Are we to take it that this is a real "last" word, that Mr. Hardy (or the Pities for him) abandons the grim Determinism that has seen in Napoleon and the Vicar of Durnover mere unconscious automata of an unconscious will? Or is this chorus a final cry of gloomy irony; does it mean that the last great jest will be the deceiving of the whole scheme of things by a false hope of an unrealisable consciousness? If the former we may yet have from Mr. Hardy a work that will beat even the best he has yet done—as it will be based on a sounder metaphysic.

Westminster Gazette Feb. 22nd 1908

MR. HARDY'S "DYNASTS."*

It is late in the day to argue about the poetical method which Mr. Hardy has adopted in "The Dynasts," and the really marvellous thing is that he should have been able to complete his task. If one could imagine the scheme laid out in advance and presented for the criticism of a literary committee, the judgment against it must surely have been unanimous. To tell the story, of the great war in historical sequence, omitting no important campaign or battle, and no political movement that contributed to it, and to throw it all into the form of a poetic drama, was to risk every kind of disaster. For though historical writers talk metaphorically of the dramas of history, the facts seldom fit themselves to the ideal construction which poets call drama, and in this particular case the unities are conspicuously absent. Drama, in fact, is precisely what Mr. Hardy does not give us, and what no one working on this plan could give us. What he gives us is a succession of scenes or tableaux presented in a dialogue form which breaks the narrative but which cannot give us the clash of motive and personality which is the characteristic of dramatic dialogue. The reason is simple, and it applies to all or most historical subjects. You cannot bring the conflicting characters on to the same scene at the same time. Napoleon and Wellington, for instance, cannot be made to meet without gross violation of historical fact. So the scene has to shift from one camp to the other, and we see each protagonist separately developing his own case, surrounded by sympathetic and admiring friends. Mr. Hardy tries to link up these separate scenes by introducing "Phantom Intelligences," who comment in the manner of the Greek chorus. There is the Spirit of the Years, the Chorus of the Years, the Spirit of the Pities, the Chorus of the Pities, and so forth. By this means he contrives to convey—in a somewhat fatalistic manner—the sense that some immanent will is at work unifying the whole process and making the various actors instruments of a world-process of which they are themselves unconscious. But, again, in so far as this is the moral of the writer, it reduces the actors to automata, and to that extent robs them of their dramatic significance. The reader may object that the ideas of fate and necessity are powerfully behind the Greek tragedy, but in that the leading characters are displayed as struggling with necessity, and as the struggle proceeds we are moved to pity and fear, whereas Mr. Hardy's characters are all alike in the hands of forces whose purposes they subserve by conflicts which are otherwise void of significance. So what we are witnessing becomes a wild phantasmagoria of fate, not a struggle of intelligent beings with will at work and fate to mould. The Semichorus of the Pities is heard wailing above the Bridge of the Beresina:

> So loudly swell their shrieks as to be heard above the roar of the guns and the wailful wind.
> Giving in one brief cry their last wild word on that mock life through which they have harlequined.

Here is Mr. Hardy's keynote—the "mock life through which they have harlequined"—and, in so far as he strikes it, the drama of human will goes out of his poem. It is quite true that in the final dialogue of the "Phantom Intelligences" in the overworld we have a hint of some ultimate deliverance:

> Semichorus I. of the Pities.
> Nay;—shall not Its blindness break?
> Yea, must not Its heart awake,
> Promptly tending
> To Its mending
> In a genial germing purpose, and for loving-kindness' sake?
>
> Semichorus II.
> Should It never
> Curb or cure
> Aught whatever
> Those endure
> Whom It quickens, let them darkle to extinction swift and sure.
>
> Chorus.
> But—a stirring thrills the air
> Like to sounds of joyance there
> That the rages
> Of the ages
> Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
> Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair!

But, whatever the final dim purpose may be, the process here and now is so dominated by the "dark dumb Thing that turns the handle of this idle show" that the "Phantom Intelligences" themselves can make nothing of it:

> Semichorus I. of the Years (aerial music).
> O Immanence, That reasonest not
> In putting forth all things begot,
> Thou build'st Thy house in space—for what?
>
> Semichorus II.
> O Loveless, Hateless!—past the sense
> Of kindly eyed benevolence,
> To what tune danceth this Immense?

And yet for a real drama the thing shown on the stage must be significant *per se*, and the inevitable consequence of giving it this vast extension is to reduce its meaning to the human onlooker. A great poem is possible on these assumptions, but scarcely a great drama.

The subject of Napoleon has this rather fatal fascination for all imaginative writers: they take him at his own estimate as "a man of destiny," and try to fit him into some cosmic process. Mr. Meredith did it, and Mr. Hardy does it, with results in both cases which rather baffle the reader who is not used to this cosmic thinking. But, when all is said, both are men of genius, and Mr. Hardy, like Mr. Meredith, gives us extraordinarily interesting results. As pure poetry "The Dynasts" is still to its close open to every kind of criticism. The scheme requires that a great many things shall be forced into poetry which have no business there, and which cannot by any treatment whatever be rendered poetical. In this volume there are descriptions of the battles of Salamanca, Borodino, Vittoria, Leipzig, and Waterloo, and in each case we perceive at once that Mr. Hardy has studied all the authorities and laboured his utmost to master both the strategy and the tactics. The ingenuity with which he gets the results into verse compels admiration, but it is rather as if one sat down to make a metrical version of the Registrar-General's returns. Hear the Spirit of Rumour describe the battle of Salamanca:

> Wellington mounts and seeks out Pakenham,
> Who pours into the arena from the right,
> And, passing to the left of Marmont's line,
> Shakes Thomière with lunges leonine.
>
> When the manœuvre's meaning hits his sense,
> Marmont hies hotly to the imperilled place,
> Where see him fall, sore smitten.—Bonnet rides
> And dons the burden of the chief command,
> Marking dismayed the Thomière column there
> Shut up by Pakenham like bellows-folds
> Against the English Fourth and Fifth hard by;
> And while thus crushed, Dragoon Guards and Dragoons,
> Under Le Marchant's hands (of Guernsey he),
> Are launched upon them by Sir Stapleton,
> And their scathed files are double-scathed anon.
>
> Cotton falls wounded. Pakenham's bayoneteers
> Shape for the charge from column into rank;
> And Thomière finds death thereat point-blank.

Not infrequently Mr. Hardy's sense of humour seems to desert him in his search for a rhyme, and we get such couplets as

> Though such features lie afar
> From events Peninsular. . . . . .

The (next page)

The

character of Marie Louise and her bewilderment between her husband and her father could not be better suggested; and in the death of Josephine Mr. Hardy allows himself one of his rare lapses into simple pathos:

III

I am dying, dears;
And do not mind it—notwithstanding that
I feel I die regretted. You both love me!—
And as for France, I ever have desired
Her welfare, as you know—have wrought all things
A woman's scope could reach to forward it. . . .
And to you now who watch my ebbing here,
Declare I that Napoléon's first-chose wife
Has never caused her land a needless tear.
Tell him—these things I have said—bear him my love—
Tell him—I could not write!

The choruses contain many admirable lyrics in a somewhat original manner, but they would look uncouth if quoted apart from their context. This is the metre that Mr. Hardy chiefly affects:

CHORUS OF THE YEARS.

Yea, the coneys are scared by the thud of hoofs,
And their white scuts flash at their vanishing heels,
And swallows abandon the hamlet-roofs.

The mole's tunnelled chambers are crushed by wheels,
The lark's eggs scattered, their owners fled,
And the hare's hid litter the sapper unseals.

The snail draws in at the terrible tread,
But in vain; he is crushed by the felloe-rim;
The worm asks what can be overhead.

"The Dynasts," however, does not lend itself to quotation, and cannot be judged by any separate section in it. The effect which it produces is, as we have said, a total effect, an effect which is cumulative, and which grows on the reader, even though he finds its method difficult and its form uncouth. We can imagine some readers greatly disliking it, and denying its title to be called poetry, but we can hardly imagine anyone doubting that it is the work of a very remarkable mind, which has plunged into the depths of a great theme.

The Spectator March 21st 1908

WE congratulate Mr. Hardy on the completion of what, with all its strangeness and imperfections, is a very remarkable poem. Four years ago, when the first part appeared, we stated very frankly the objections on the score of art both to the form Mr. Hardy had chosen and to his method of treatment. We complained of the angularity of the verse, the hard determinism of the philosophy, and the almost comic presentment of the choruses of spirits. We thought that the unities had been too completely disregarded, with the result that the reader received no clear dramatic impression, and the beauties were episodic. To many of these criticisms, especially those on the score of form, we adhere; but the subsequent volumes have led us to revise our judgment on one important point. We wrote in 1904 that Mr. Hardy's reach seemed to exceed his grasp. After laying down the last volume we admit that we were wrong. Taking the completed poem, we feel that the poet has attained unity, and that the dramatic quality of the whole is his great achievement. It is a strange, unearthly drama which unrols for us Europe like a map, and shows us Kings and peasants moving like automata at the guidance of the Immanent Will, which spreads like a vast tissue through the brains of the protagonists. In this latest part the great story moves fast to its close. The action is more closely knit, and the sense of destiny comes, not from the comments of the spirits, but from the words and deeds of the actors. There are scenes of the most poignant and arresting drama. To name only a few: the fall of the first snowflake at Smolensk; the finding of the dead French by Kutúzof; Napoleon at Leipzig, "idly singing then"; the horrible dumb-show of the invasion of France; the death of Josephine; the Waterloo ball; the scene among the camp-followers at Mont Saint-Jean, especially the servant's account of Picton's death; the whole picture of Waterloo; the last soliloquy of Napoleon,—these are poetry of the highest order. We know no such study in literature of Napoleon's character, no such vivid and haunting picture of a great battle. The minor figures are carefully studied. As was to be expected, Mr. Hardy's common soldiers are English peasants with the rough accent of life. The spirits still trouble us a little. Their style is apt to be unsuitable, as when they chant a rondeau after Salamanca, and at Leipzig sing a jaunty ditty with phrases in it like

"Poland's three despoilers primed by Bull's bold pay."

Some of the songs, however, seem to us the best lyrics Mr. Hardy has written. The Chorus of the Years sings a Blake-like song after Ligny, and the last chorus of all succeeds in wedding metaphysics to lovely music. The "Mad Soldier's Song" in the retreat from Moscow haunts the memory like a catch in Shakespeare. The philosophy, too, has taken a happier colouring. A hope of ultimate good relieves the fatalism of the early scenes, and the Pities speak the last word:—

"Yet is it but Napoleon who has failed.
The pale pathetic peoples still plod on
Through hoodwinkings to light."

Manchester Guardian Feb. 24th 1908

THE DYNASTS.

THE DYNASTS. A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. By Thomas Hardy. Part III. London: Macmillan and Co. Pp. xiii. 355. 4s. 6d. net.

The first part of Mr. Hardy's huge drama was published more than four years ago, and this third brings the last of its 19 acts and 130 scenes. We may congratulate him on the completion of a work so different from the novels that have made him illustrious and undertaken with some patriotic intention of historical adjustment. There is one scene at the Opera in London in which the particular honour of breaking Napoleon is claimed in turn for Austria, Russia, Prussia, and England. Mr. Hardy has tried to put things in their true proportions, and those who care for picturesque and unconventional history by an imaginative writer of human sympathies may find here much stimulating matter. The vast pageant of Napoleon's wars is unfolded upon a stage that has no physical limitations and is yet in conception essentially a stage; Mr. Hardy suggests, indeed, that "mental performance" may eventually become the medium of heroic drama.

This third part of "The Dynasts" begins with the passage of the Niemen by the Grand Army, and ends with Waterloo. Napoleon is, of course, the principal figure, but though Mr. Hardy manages well enough to give him a certain formal dominance, he is not deeply studied nor presented with much imaginative sympathy. Mr. Hardy can write finely in various ways, but he is not primarily a dramatic poet. If Macbeth and Othello had been given to us, as this Napoleon, in merely useful, vigorous verse, their psychology or humanity would not have saved them. This drama, nevertheless, appeals to the imagination as an astonishing attempt to give such hints of masses and movements as may bring before us the great series of campaigns and social disturbances. Mr. Hardy is not content with the bird's-eye view, but makes bold excursions into the unthinkable. To number the sands of the shore should be easy, for he would count the waves of the sea. He shows us "the brain tissues of the Immanent Will that pervades all things," and struggles bravely with infinity. Even his Napoleon, a materialist of the narrowest ideals, pauses to review himself as a puppet swayed by great contending forces. Mr. Hardy does not, as Tolstoy does, reduce Napoleon in mind and character to the ranks, but he plays upon his pretensions in the comments of ironic and pitiful spirits, the "phantom intelligences" that represent the author's moods. If we are not the sport of the gods, the gods move obscurely behind these futilities of irony and pity. This grandiose machinery of a phantom stage may seem irrelevant, but in one way or another Mr. Hardy does give us, with something of the poet's fervour and of the historian's care, an emotional counterpart, in the imaginative and endurable degree, of the invasion of Russia or the Battle of Waterloo. The details cannot be fully explored, and they suggest Whitman's far-embracing, purposeful cataloguing.

Mr. Hardy's drama is not only deeply interesting in parts but it is always readable.

A. N. M.

Manchester Guardian May 23 - 1908

Mr. E. B. [illegible] writes from [illegible] Cottage, Poynton:—"It is on record that one of our 'great' reviewers saluted the early poems of a certain great poet—'tis an accommodating word 'great' and has many meanings—with the illumining remark, 'This will never do.' We are a conservative people and tradition is strong in the land, and it is therefore with more joy than surprise that one gathers from your 'Books and Bookmen' column of last week that the 'Edinburgh Review' considers that Mr. Hardy's 'Dynasts' brings us down to a 'very low level of verse.' For it would have been a pity, when a great book has been born into the world, if our leading reviews had failed to be worthy of their past. The 'Edinburgh' Reviewer, it seems, considers 'The Dynasts' to be lacking in the essentials of poetry. The essentials of poetry are truth and passion, and in these 'The Dynasts' is not lacking, 'plentifully' or otherwise. It is true, melody, which seems to be what the reviewer means by the essence of poetry, is not Mr. Hardy's chief merit as a poet. It is not the chief merit of any poet. Melody is an ornament, a fine clothing that essential poetry can do without. In speaking of Mr. Hardy as a poet one should remember that he is the author not only of 'The Dynasts,' but also of 'The Souls of the Slain,' with its wonderful and unexpected conclusion, of 'The Mother Mourns,' of 'To an Unborn Pauper Child,' to name just a few of his other poems. It is true his work is seldom 'melodious,' and even 'felicitous' is not the first adjective that leaps to the mind in thinking of it. Instead, it is poignant, passionate, truthful, and heavy with thought, for Mr. Hardy has that possession rarest among men, rare even among poets—an individual philosophy of life. One admits therefore that Mr. Hardy is not pretty, not charming, not melodious, not felicitous. Anyone can pick from any part of 'The Dynasts' lines that, standing by themselves, would undoubtedly appear to be on a 'low level of verse'; the 'sample' method of criticism, unfair to any book, happens to be particularly unfair to 'The Dynasts.' It is also more than usually silly. Certainly, 'The Dynasts' is an unusual book; it is a play that cannot be acted; it is a story told in flashes where the reader has to supply the connection; it is a poem whose structure requires the occasional use of 'verse on a low level,' as when Parliamentary debates are given with even the familiar 'hear, hear' and 'laughter' in brackets. It is rough-hewn, perhaps, to use a now common expression; though it is a greater work than any of the Frenchman's sculptures, one can compare it best to a statue of Rodin's, wherein the critic can easily find a thousand irregularities, and 'infelicities,' and points that no one else would have done in precisely that way, and apparent neglects, and seeming errors, all of which the critic dubs faults, and in hurrying to point out which he misses the glory of the completed work. And 'The Dynasts' is above all a book that must be judged as a whole. One can even regret that Mr. Hardy issued it in three volumes at long intervals. It is essentially a unity, and if it is not perfect, it is the finest poem written since Wordsworth's time, and it and 'Paradise Lost' stand together as the only two epic-poems that England possesses."

Christian Commonwealth April 29th 1908

THE DYNASTS.

Mr. Hardy's great achievement is now complete, and the third part of "The Dynasts"* is now in our hands. Mr. Hardy was by no means a young man when he undertook this great historical task, and he is to be congratulated on the courage which animated him to undertake it, and the steadfastness with which he has carried it through.

A special word is necessary with regard to Mr. Hardy's philosophy. Mr. Hardy is not a Theist, although in this last book he comes a little closer to the theistic position. He has never been able wholly to free himself from the idea of an Over-world, he has always been dimly conscious that above us some power rules that is infinitely mightier than the dreams and efforts of puny humanity. But he has always believed that the Power is unconscious; or, if consciousness be attributed to it, it is conceived as sinister and ironic. He is by temperament a Calvinist, with the Christology left out, just as Carlyle was. In this work we see the old theory of "the World as Will" recurring. It is remarkable how deeply this theory has entered into our later literature; it will be found everywhere in the writings of such men as Henley and Kipling. To Hardy that Will has always been blind and fatal; we welcome this book because in it we see Mr. Hardy feeling after the thought that the Will means Intelligence, and reaching out wistfully towards the hope that it may mean Love as well.

Napoleon is the only character who is conscious at times of the working of this Immanent Will. It need hardly be pointed out that though we have here all the grandeur and majesty of Calvinism, all sense of moral values, all need for praise or blame, disappear; men become automata, swept along by mighty forces they cannot comprehend. That means the disappearance of drama.

One is glad to think that the last word is given to the Pities; with that word we may fitly close this notice of a great work:—

Semi-chorus of the Pities (speaking of the [illegible]

Power over all things).
Nay; shall not Its blindness break! . . . .

Chorus.

[illegible]

County Life Feb. 20th 1908

WHILE reading the third volume of Mr. Thomas Hardy's extraordinary drama, *The Dynasts* (Macmillan), there kept ringing in our ears the piteous conjecture of Tennyson's dying Arthur that some God had made the world, but had not power to shape it as he would. For the creation of that microcosm, a novel or a drama, the first essential is conception. In this Mr. Hardy is magnificently successful. His idea is to show how the lurid career of Napoleon might affect a number of abstractions which for the purpose of his work are represented by concrete entities. We should, indeed, understand the significance of the battle of Waterloo if we grasped the manner in which it was regarded by such "Phantom Intelligences" as "The Ancient Spirit of the Years," "The Spirit of the Pities," "Spirits Sinister and Ironic," "The Spirit of Rumour," "The Shade of the Earth" and "The Recording Angels." It was, at least, no mean or petty ambition to bring the most significant event of the nineteenth century under the searching rays of these several lights. The subject would have fascinated Goethe; and, indeed, Mr. Hardy's Spirits Sinister and Ironic speak the language and think the thoughts of his Mephistopheles. But the theme was too immense, the plan too huge and elaborate. The two former parts of this book were bewildering, and it is only when the battle is over that we fully grasp the aim of the author's subtle and far-reaching intellect. Had he been compelled, like Shakespeare, to follow the convention of five acts instead of spreading out to nineteen, and to compress and distil till he had brought the play within compass of one rendering, it is no paradox to say that the fetters would have increased his freedom of movement. As it is, the reader has to traverse a long and dismal waste before arriving at the city chosen of the novelist. Mr. Hardy labours under the further disadvantage that he is not an artist in expression. His verse is to be read not because it is poetry, that is to say a melody, a thought that sings, but because of its pregnancy. . . . . .

Again, take the speech of "A Voice in the Wind" on the next page. If heard at all, it should have been like a strain of music, yet in the course of five lines we have the harsh, crude phrases, "hostile hatchings of Napoleon's brain," "mangled all our mild amenities," "the hunger for embranglement" (a most uncouth word), "left us optionless." Wellington and the English generally are equipped with two phrases, "By God!" and "What the hell!" They do not seem quite sufficient. In his stammering ha-ha-ing sort of way Wellington could always say what his cold, clear common-sense suggested. The only language in the book that deserves to be called excellent, because it fits exactly into the mouths of those who utter it, is that of the Dorset rustics. Perhaps we might make another exception in regard to the Spirit Ironic. When, after his Moscow campaign, Napoleon returns to the Tuileries, shabby, muddy and almost dead with hardship, the Empress Marie Louise is agitated almost to fainting. "Is it with fright or joy?" asks the Ironic Spirit. When Wellington, struck with admiration of Marshal Ney's charge, exclaims, "The finest cavalry commander," the Spirit Ironic sings:

> And when that matchless chief
> Sentenced shall lie to ignominious death
> But technically deserved, no finger he
> Who speaks will lift to save him!

Another ironic comment on the battle is this:

> Warfare mere,
> Plied by the Managed for the Managers;
> To wit: by fellow-folks who profit nought
> For those who profit all!

When the Pities suggest that the very dead are moved by the horror of the scene, grim Irony answers:

> Mere fancy's feints!
> How know the coffined what comes after them,
> Even though it whirl them to the Pleiades?—
> Turn to the real. . . . . .

So ends one of the most remarkable books written in our time. Many will dislike and call it unpatriotic, for Mr. Hardy is unsparing of his sarcasms at the expense of Castlereagh and the diplomats and politicians generally. But no one is likely to deny that it is the fruit of a great intellect. No one, be he poet or historian, who has written of Waterloo and the career of Napoleon has with equal strength and courage tried to place these phenomena in Time as regards their intrinsic importance and their effect on human development. Mr. Hardy falls short of his high aims only because of his deficiency in the art of poetic expression. His phrases strike the mind, but they lack the glamour and haunting melody, the distilled beauty that so high a theme required. What we mean will become apparent from a study of the following lyric, the best in the volume:

> Yea, the coneys are scared by the thud of hoofs,
> And their white scuts flash at their vanishing heels,
> And swallows abandon the hamlet-roofs. . . . . .

Here is the very stuff out of which the highest poetry is fashioned. Nor does it lack incision of thought, wing-power of imagination, pregnancy of phrase. Yet the true and discriminating lover of literature will feel that though it contains so many elements of great poetry it still lacks that final gift of inspiration, without which there can be no immortal verse. Our remarks will have shown what a realistic interest this third volume has. The pages are filled with names of those who have played parts in the making of history and made historic scenes—a great debate in Parliament, the Duchess of Richmond's ball at Brussels, incidents in the retreat from Moscow—that have been discussed and rediscussed since the days of Scott and Byron.

Daily Telegraph Feb. 19th 1908

By W. L. COURTNEY.

THOMAS HARDY'S DRAMA
"THE DYNASTS."

(MACMILLAN. 3rd vol. 4s 6d net.)

More than four years ago the first volume was issued of Mr. Thomas Hardy's drama, "The Dynasts." We now have the third and final volume, bringing to a fine, sonorous conclusion a piece of work which is as remarkable as any which have been produced in the contemporary period. It would, indeed, be possible, however unjust, to describe it only by a series of negatives. It is not a drama; that is to say it is not in any sense meant to be acted on the stage. It is not a history, for there is no formal recital of the various episodes, with the logical deductions drawn from certain events to their natural consequents; but a somewhat arbitrary selection of striking scenes, illustrating from the point of view of the author the conduct of a great epoch-making tragedy. Again it is not a poem, although full of poetic material—just in the same way as Browning was not a dramatist, although his work is full of dramatic romance. Lastly, it is assuredly not a novel, such as we have been accustomed to receive from the hands of one of the most distinguished novelists of our time. The nearest approach which Mr. Hardy made to a novel on the Napoleonic War was his "Trumpet Major," published about a quarter of a century ago, in which he touched the fringe of mighty European events, and, indeed, presented us with a first sketch out of which the "Dynasts" has been developed. But now, having finished our series of negative descriptions, what can we say positively that Mr. Hardy's drama is? It is a most vivid and impressive composition, based on a vast amount of knowledge of the subject with which it deals, and reared into a fantastic structure, full of genius and insight. The form will repel some readers, perhaps; or possibly the introduction amongst historic characters of an over-world full of "phantom intelligences" may distract them. Nevertheless, so far as we can see, these choruses of spirits are very necessary for Mr. Hardy's purpose, and while, in their fashion, they keep up the idea of a dramatic structure, they also help us to understand the point of view of the author. Although it is neither history nor drama, neither a poem nor a novel, "The Dynasts" is one of the most magnificent contributions which Mr. Hardy has made to the literature of our time. Its peculiar position may, perhaps, be best explained by an analogy. It stands to the present generation as Carlyle's great work, "The French Revolution," stood to a preceding generation. For that, too, was neither history nor drama, and yet in the most vivid and picturesque fashion fulfilled the functions of both.

Let us stop for a moment over these "phantom intelligences," to which allusion has already been made. They represent a kind of philosophy of history, or from another standpoint they represent the Chorus of the antique Hellenic drama, modernised and brought into accordance with our prevailing conceptions. Some of us are already aware of that philosophy of the Universe to which Mr. Hardy has committed himself. In his view the world is not guided by any Intelligence. No Providence rules it with kindly thoughts, or benevolent designs for the perfection of the race, or develops it towards an ultimate millennium. There is no generosity, nor kindness, nor thought, because these things belong to anthropomorphism, to the idea that the Governor of the world is a person, a magnified and non-natural man. We must no longer speak of "He" and "His," but rather of "It," or at most of the "Immanent Will." This Will is blind, unwitting, resistless, without compunction, carrying on a drama of which it is not cognisant, building up events which have no purpose, carrying things out, not in accordance with a pre-determined design, but simply because its energies must have their outlet in an unconscious artistry of their own. . . . . .

It is this general conception, so ably designed, so masterfully executed, which makes "The Dynasts" a very conspicuous and remarkable achievement. It is a dreary drama so viewed, but then Mr. Hardy is a pessimist, as we have long ago discovered, and believes, with all his heart, that optimism is the silliest of human delusions. The effect on our mind of "The Dynasts" is, despite all its peculiarity of form, that of Greek drama. Here, too, a vague, impalpable Fate rests on all the characters, driving them in ways they know not of. If Œdipus kills his father and marries his mother, it is because he is a child of Destiny. If Agamemnon, on his return from Troy, is murdered by Clytemnestra, who in her turn is murdered by Orestes, this melancholy series of deaths is so ordained by the inscrutable decrees of Fate. And so Napoleon, too, is a child of Destiny—not in any Shakespearian sense, as though he were a great, intelligent, unscrupulous world-force, whose very character made his destiny, but rather as a weapon forged by the Will of the Universe, the efficiency of which is not his, but the world's. Perhaps this view of him becomes more prominent in the third volume of Mr. Hardy's drama, because here we see the Sun of Austerlitz fading in the Western sky. In the third volume, which commences with the disastrous Russian campaign, we have traced before our eyes the tragedy of Moscow, the Bridge of the blood-stained Beresina, the ruin of the Grande Armée on the snow-swept Russian plains. And then, without intermission, one after another come the shocks which make the human god totter on his throne. There is the Peninsular campaign, with the successes of Wellington; there is Leipzic, with the peril and retreat of the French. There is also the hurried departure from Paris, the farewell to Marie Louise, the despair of Josephine, the banishment to Elba, and, last scene of all in this eventful history, come the Hundred Days, with their vivid and dramatic events. The ball-room in Brussels is once more portrayed before our eyes, the field of Ligny, the field of Quatre-Bras, above all the Titanic struggle at Waterloo, and the final disaster which shattered the Corsican's hopes. It is all planned on a great scale. The scenes depicted are typical scenes, which steadily converge towards a dénouement.

Sunday School Chronicle March 19th 1908

THE DYNASTS.

"The Dynasts." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan & Co. In three parts. 4s. 6d. net each.)

MR. HARDY is to be congratulated upon the completion of a great work Impelled by patriotism, and with Napoleon as the protagonist in his drama and the whole of Europe as its theatre, Mr. Hardy has approached a grand subject in the grand manner, and *The Dynasts* will remain as a splendid monument to his great genius.

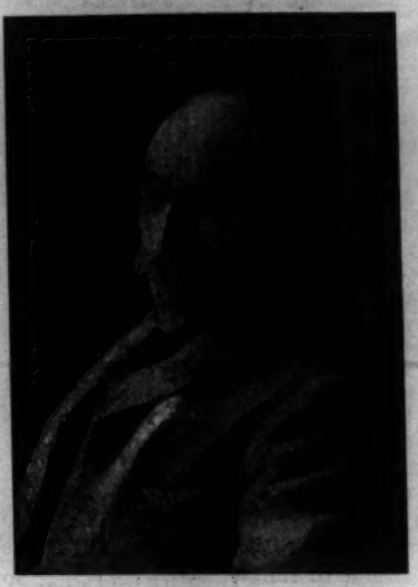
All his novels show that Mr. Hardy's genius is for epic poetry. One need not do more than cite in proof his use of Egdon Heath as Chorus in tragedy, endued as it is by him with personality impressive and distinct, albeit mute. In *The Dynasts* this genius has room to spread its wings, and it is safe to say that in the whole history of epic poetry few higher and more memorable flights have been accomplished. By this great drama Mr. Hardy has enriched English literature more abundantly than he has done by all the sum of his novels.

No attempt shall be made here to criticise *The Dynasts*. This stupendous imaginative work takes its place at once among the classics, and the moment of its completion is not the one at which to turn upon it the dissecting knife, or the lens. The whole cultivated world is surely at one now in congratulating and applauding its author upon the successful achievement of a life's ambition. V. E. M.

THOMAS HARDY'S 'MAGNUM OPUS.'

The Dynasts. A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars, in three parts, nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes. By Thomas Hardy. Three Vols. (Macmillan. 13s. 6d. net.)

On September 25, 1907, Mr. Thomas Hardy finished his latest and greatest work, *The Dynasts*. The first volume, containing Part I., was published in 1904, the preface bearing date September, 1903, so that, roughly speaking, the whole work has taken four years to produce from the time Part I. went to press, and it may, of course, have taken some years previously to excogitate the plot and write that first section, usually the most difficult part of a literary undertaking. It is no slight work of the imagination, therefore, that the veteran novelist presents us with in *The Dynasts*, in which he traces the fate of the old dynasties of Europe that went down like ninepins before the genius of Napoleon. Mr. Hardy could doubtless have turned out three novels dealing with Napoleon's period or with the Emperor himself in less than half the time he took to produce this drama, had he chosen, but the Immanent Will willed it otherwise, and now the Spirit of the Years, the Spirit of the Pities, the Spirit Ironic and the Semi-choruses—all well known in Fleet-street newspaper offices—are uttering or preparing to utter their views and verdicts on the performance. Some will say it is grand, many will say it is difficult, and a few, possibly, may hint that it was unnecessary. Our own opinion is that it will please highly those whom it will please, and that it would please many more if they could be got to read it. The chief objection to it is the form. A drama in three, or even in five acts men know; but a drama in nineteen acts is apt to seem a bit of a nightmare. There may be too much of a good thing. The brain reels with the thought of sitting out such a stupendous performance—at least, the modern brain does. But the apprehension is misplaced. The author never contemplated a consecutive stage performance of his one hundred and thirty scenes. It may also be as well to suggest to the reader that an elementary acquaintance with the career of Napoleon is presupposed and indeed essential to any enjoyment of the drama. In addition a tolerance of spiritual presences—in the shape of spirits and choruses of sorts—is predicated, and everyone who has looked into Shakespeare knows that there are precedents for these, without going back to the Greek drama.



MR. THOMAS HARDY.

There are books that tend to produce exaltation in the reader, they lift him above the ground level of the ordinary life and make him a co-operator with the great forces of the universe. Such a book is *The Dynasts*. You watch as from a distant coign of vantage the world-wide cataclysms of those days, which, for all that they seem so far from us now, were quite near to many who have recently passed away. The number of those living who can remember the Battle of Waterloo even as children in the nursery can probably be counted on the fingers of both hands, for the event happened ninety-two years ago. But there are many who can recall the feelings of relief with which their elders then living referred to the defeat of the great bogey of that day, the nightmare of the nations, including even our own. Something of this feeling—that Napoleon was an inhuman monster, an enemy of the race—is here and there reflected in *The Dynasts*, although it must be confessed that Mr. Hardy seems to have fallen occasionally under the glamour of the conqueror's great reputation. Or perhaps it would be fairer to say that Mr. Hardy is so convinced a determinist, not to say fatalist, that he declines to debit the slaughterings and other horrors of Napoleon's campaigns to their immediate author, but throws their burden back upon the Immanent Will? For this reason, too, the impression we get of Napoleon's personality is not so clear and emphatic as we could wish. We are left in doubt whether he was a patriot or a mere ambitious self-seeker, whether he was capable of a spark of real affection or gratitude or loyalty to a friend or follower, whether he had any honour or even any respect for truth. In almost his last military act, on the field of Waterloo, he is represented as condescending to a base lie, in the matter of informing his troops falsely that Grouchy was approaching, when he knew it was Blücher, therein overruling the scruples of the valiant Ney. His desertion of the remnants of his 'Grand Army' in Russia after Moscow is on record as evidence of his indifference to the calls of loyalty to his followers, but Napoleon's apologists have an answer, which to some may seem sufficient—namely, that his presence was necessary in Paris. His treatment of Josephine was a clearer indication of the innate selfishness of the man, and it is with a feeling that justice was tardily being done and that he only got his deserts that we watch the behaviour of the Empress Marie Louise, Josephine's innocent supplanter, when she prefers to dally with her Count in a place of safety to sharing her fallen spouse's fortunes at Elba or at St. Helena. It is difficult after reading Mr. Hardy's presentation of Napoleon to regard him with any feeling of real admiration, and if pity is evoked by a contemplation of his fall it is entirely due to the theory of the Immanent Will, making Napoleon and the others puppets. In the words of Omar (or FitzGerald), all mortals, ourselves amongst them, are in the same evil case:

> We are no other than a moving row
> Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
> Round with the Sun-illumined Lantern held
> In Midnight by the Master of the Show.

As to the verse in this drama, much of it is harsh and uncouth, but it is saved by brilliant flashes of genius. Space forbids quotation, but the studious reader will not long delay to make close acquaintance with a work that is bound to become a classic.

The Literary Guide June 1908

ALL lovers of literature ought to accord a hearty welcome to Thomas Hardy's latest work, *The Dynasts*. It throws fresh light on the fascinating personality of one of the greatest of living writers.

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Just at the moment when the critics decreed that the study-drama is an anachronism, here steps down to them Thomas Hardy with his drama in three volumes. As the play includes nearly twenty acts and over a hundred scenes, no one will pretend that it could be acted. Yet *The Dynasts* is a most notable literary achievement. The subject is the Titanic struggles of the Napoleonic wars. We begin with the preparations in England to meet an expected French invasion; we end with the carnage of Waterloo. The author professes as one of his objects that of keeping alive in memory the part which England played in these Dynastic upheavals.

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Thomas Hardy is one of the first of living novelists. *The Dynasts* shows other and rarer aspects of his genius: *Wessex Poems* proved his poetic abilities. His latest book presents his dramatic and poetic gifts to greater advantage on a larger canvas. The versification of *The Dynasts* is extremely characteristic. We have been accustomed in Whitman and George Meredith to verse which seems not to be poetry and yet is; to verse that is not melodious nor beautiful as verse, and yet conveys a sense of beauty. But, though these poets often adopt strange methods, we feel that they are absolute masters of their medium. In *The Dynasts* we have this abiding sense of artistry. The versification, too, is varied. We have the fine introductory sonnets which have a largeness and dignity in harmony with their subjects. The human beings in the play mostly speak in blank verse. The "supernatural" characters utter their feelings in lyrical form. The music throughout responds to the grandeur of the theme. As we would expect, the death of Nelson inspires the author; and in the part which relates thereto we find his versification at its best—

> Who in simplicity and sheer good faith
> Strove but to serve his country.

And that touch of the "grey dial"

> Marking unconsciously this bloody hour

is of the higher flights of imagination.

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The juxtaposition of the verse makes a splendid foil to the prose. And what splendid prose writing it is. Thomas Hardy is here an acknowledged master. Here we gain the thrill which comes from the sure and certain work of consummate genius. Here we get multitudinous instances of that puissant imagination which clothes all his prose work with a shining garment, a magic light shed upon common things.

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The prose preface is a most delightful piece of work. How characteristic, too, is the author's ironic and iconoclastic explanation of the introduction of the "supernatural" characters in the play! Turning to the lighter passages in these three volumes, Wessex finds its due honour in charming little allusions to local heroes, in richly humorous scraps of the racy Dorset dialect, and, above all, in the lyrics that come like the twittering of birds between the roar of the cannons and the shouting of the soldiers. Lastly, however, through all these kaleidoscopic scenes of peace and war, of jollity and horror, the author never loses sight of the profound philosophic purport, before which a blade of Wessex grass is as important as the fate of empires. Even Napoleon, "the Man of Destiny," is presented as an instrument, an "insect in the elemental ages' chart."

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The last word in this vast drama, it is pleasant to know, for those who are mindful of the fatalistic shadow that hangs over the fall of Napoleon, is one of hope. *The Dynasts* is not merely intensely interesting and illuminating, but an astonishing fruit of the matured mind of one of England's writers of rare genius.

Westminster Review May 1908

It is a little difficult to decide under what head to place Thomas Hardy's "Dynasts."[1] It is a drama, but not presentable on the stage. It is history, but given in a dramatic form. And the atmosphere of helpless subjection to the rule of "the Great Foresightless," in which everything takes place, would justify us in putting the book under the head of "philosophy." As, however, we can offer only a notice, and not a detailed criticism, we choose the head of "drama." And as a drama, conditioned by the author's claim that it shall be staged, not on the boards of a theatre, but in the reader's imagination, we do not hesitate to describe it as a very powerful production.

Much as Hardy has given us, for which we have been thankful, we are prepared to treasure his "Dynasts" as one of his best services to our literature. It is a work which deserves to be regarded as the necessary accompaniment of the study of the history of the period he illustrates. There has been an impression abroad that we are to regard this work as a kind of swan-song of Hardy's pen: but surely it is not. We dare to hope that now he has relieved his mind of what has been a serious project of many years, he will discover mental elasticity enough to add at least another to his list of fictions. We so seldom have Hardys amongst us that we are greedy to get what we can from them.

The Northern Whig Feb. 29th 1908

LITERATURE.

MR. HARDY'S "PANORAMIC SHOW."

THE DYNASTS: A DRAMA OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS. Part III. By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan. 4s 6d net.

It is the boast of English literature that from its earliest days it has refused to be bound in the swaddling bands of conventional forms and academic methods, that its writers have never consented to work according to a formula. The boast is quite legitimate and proper, but it is an open question if that licence springs from a perception of the value of allowing an artist free play in regard of treatment or is merely the result of insensibility to problems of form. There has been plenty of toleration for men who have played fast and loose with generally accepted methods, but those who have said a new thing in a new way, such as Wordsworth, Browning, or Meredith, have received a cold welcome at the best.

Something of the same attitude may be seen in the reception given to Mr. Hardy's "Dynasts"—the final volume of which has now been published—though his position in the world of letters has assured him a respectful hearing. But the average man is not deterred by the authority with which the artist speaks, and he frankly confesses in his own phrase that he has "no use for" a drama of the Napoleonic wars in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes. He demands fiercely why Mr. Hardy cannot be satisfied with Wessex and employ his time in writing another story as good as "Tess" or "The Return of the Native." The critic who has advanced a little confidence himself to pointing out that it would never suit the stage, a fact which the author has fully admitted, and deplores the lack of continuity in a drama that leaps from Moscow to the Peninsula, and from the Peninsula to Weymouth or Vauxhall Gardens, in the short space of an act.

But after the critics have said their say the book remains a new thing in literature, with nothing that one can well compare it to save perhaps the second part of Goethe's "Faust." There are readers who can see little in it save an orgy of senseless intriguing and stupid butchery, selfish diplomatists in quiet rooms pulling the strings, and men blowing out one another's brains at point-blank range, impaling their fellows on bayonets, or being trodden into shapeless masses under the hoofs of charging cavalry. It seems to them, as a critic used to say of sensational drama, "a case not for art, but for the police," and they turn away dazed and bewildered. But that is to forget the point of view which Mr. Hardy has taken and described so magnificently in an earlier

The nether sky opens, and Europe is disclosed as a prone and emaciated figure; the Alps shaping like a backbone and the branching mountain chains like ribs, the peninsula plateau of Spain forming a head. Broad and lengthy lowlands stretch from the North of France across Russia like a grey-green garment, hemmed by the Ural Mountains and the glistening Arctic Ocean.

The point of view then sinks downward through space, and draws near to the surface of the perturbed countries, where the peoples, distressed by events which they did not cause, are seen writhing, crawling, heaving, and vibrating in their various cities and nationalities.

And the impetus that urges them, to which they give big names—honour, patriotism, duty, ambition, love—Mr. Hardy shows us as "the controlling Immanent Will," which appears in his vision "as a brain-like network of currents and ejections, twitching, interpenetrating, entangling, and thrusting hither and thither the human forms." One remembers Omar Khayyam:—

> We are no other than a moving row
> Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go,
> Round with the Sun-illumined Lantern held
> In Midnight by the Master of the Show.

That is an old idea of the philosophers, but instead of working it out in terms of a few obscure individual lives Mr. Hardy takes for his "panoramic show" Europe during one of the greatest convulsions in her history, and reveals what we dignify as world-shaking events as no more than a disturbance in an ant-hill, armies dwindling to "molluscs on a leaf," absurd generals in cocked hats waving toy swords and puppet orators declaiming in stuffy chambers, while in the upper air—from which the earth is a mere confused expanse under drifting clouds—spirits, sinister, ironic, or pitiful, laugh or weep at the tragi-comic blunders of mankind.

To achieve his effects Mr. Hardy does not hesitate to make ducks and drakes of generally accepted conventions. He jerks his curtain up and down in a fashion that would drive any well-regulated stage manager to the verge of madness; he makes historical personages like Wellington and Napoleon talk in crude blank verse—perhaps for the reason Mr. Shaw gave for employing it in "The Admirable Bashville" that he had not time to write in prose—and he displays a regal disregard of loose threads and rough edges.

These are all faults for which he had been severely taken to task, but he has his answer ready, if he cared to make it, that in spite, or it may be because, of them he gets his effects and creates the impression he desired. And what a magnificent series of impressions he obtains! History, we are told now, is the art of miniature painting, not of fresco work, and nobody can ever venture again to describe the spirit of an epoch as Carlyle did in "The French Revolution." But in these three volumes Mr. Hardy has summed up the long drama of Napoleon's rise and fall from Austerlitz to Waterloo, and has given us not merely the story of Napoleon or even of France but of Europe during a decade of great happenings. And where the historian sees these things from the point of view of rulers and statesmen, Mr. Hardy presents them "sub-specie æternitatis."

The Napoleon of legend and romance is a notable figure, but in these pages the Nietzschean overman is diminished to a pinpoint, and is equally with the weakest boy-conscript who cheers for "The Little Man in Grey" a puppet whom the Immanent Will moves to "Its inexplicable artistries." In this latter volume one finds no longer the prancing hero of Austerlitz and Wagram. At Borodino one sees a red-eyed rheumatic figure, shifting its weight from one puffed calf to another as it sips hot grog and watches the columns fling themselves on the Shevardino redoubt. Then the deserter, scurrying across Prussia, while Kutuzof and his Cossacks harry the rear of the grand army, and the snow finishes those who escape the cruel lances. Afterwards, in quick succession, the unavailing three days' battle of Leipzig, the abdication, the return from Elba, and the Hundred Days, with as an afterpiece the wood of Bossu, where, the din of Waterloo still in his ears, the great Emperor rides off the stage to the cry of the Spirit of the Years.

> Such men as thou, who wade across the world
> To make an epoch, bless, confuse, appal,
> Are in the elemental age's chart
> Like meanest insects on obscurest leaves,
> But incidents and tools of earth's unfolding;
> Or as the brazen rod that stirs the fire
> Because it must.

And against Napoleon is set Wellington, serene and imperturbable, with his rolling oaths and bluff common sense. One catches a glimpse of him bending over a map in the Duke of Richmond's drawing-room with the cry "Napoleon has fooled me, by God he has," and one sees him the next day splashed with mire and blood, the sweat trickling down his face, rallying a wavering square or peering through the smoke for a sight of the German columns beyond Planchenoit. Yet Napoleon and Wellington are merely incidents. Their actions have as much or as little value as the crowds that we hear hooting the Prince Regent at the opera house or the Wessex peasants who are shown burning Napoleon in effigy, while the Durnover band, "which includes a clarionet, serpent, oboe, tambourine, cymbals, and drum, is playing 'Lord Wellington's Hornpipe.'"

When the volume is laid aside it is not what historians describe as the great moments that remain most vividly in the mind. What one remembers best may be the chatter of sentinels in the rain as they watch the ford near Salamanca, the wailing of stragglers from the Grand Army ploughing knee-deep through the snow "with icicles dangling from their hair that clink like glass-lustres," the crowds that jeer Bonaparte as he sets off for Elba, an odd snatch of a woman's song—

> My love's gone a-fighting
> Where war-trumpets call;
> The wrongs o' men righting,
> Wi' carbine and ball,
> And sabre for smiting,
> And charger and all.

Or it may be a vision of Waterloo, not in the glory of battle, when "the allied squares stand like little brick-red castles," and "the bullets snap like stones on window-panes" against the cuirasses of the charging French cavalry, but in the twilight after the Old Guard have fired their last round and Blucher's brigades are launched in pursuit.

The reds disappear from the sky and the dusk grows deeper. The action of the battle degenerates into a hunt, and recedes further and further into the distance southward. When the tramplings and shouts of the combatants have dwindled the lower sounds are visible that come from the wounded—helpless appeals, cries for water, elaborate blasphemies, and impotent execrations of heaven and hell. In the vast and dusky shambles black slouching shapes begin to move—the plunderers of the dead and dying.

The night grows clear and beautiful, and the moon shines musingly down. But instead of the sweet smell of green herbs and dewy rye, as at her last shining upon these fields, there is now the stench of gunpowder and a muddy stew of crushed crops and gore.

And the purpose behind this outpouring of blood and tears is not shown by the author as the cut-and-dried conclusion of the average historian or the ready-made solution of the orthodox moralist. In the scene in the Overworld that ends the drama we catch in the speeches, choruses, and semi-choruses of the Spirits Sinister and Ironic, the Spirit of the Tears, and the Spirit of Pities, a hint of something behind

> . . . the dreaming, dark, dumb Thing
> That turns the handle of this idle show.

It is more a vague aspiration than a definite hope, but the final chorus does hymn the belief that—

> When far-ranged aions past all fathoming
> Shall have swung by and stand as backward years—
>
> Man may have gained understanding of the mysterious force informing "the Insdwertent mind."
>
> But—a stirring thrills the air
> Like the sounds of joyance there
> That the rages
> Of the ages
> Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered
> from the darts that were,
> Consciousness the Will informing, till It
> fashion all things fair!

Many will resent Mr. Hardy's supernatural mechanism, and refuse to accept the lesson he drives home, but nobody can read "The Dynasts" without recognising that this amazing work bears the stamp of genius, and is not a mere experiment in a new form, but a permanent addition to great literature.

The Northern Whig 30.1.11.

MR. HARDY'S EPIC DRAMA.

THE DYNASTS: AN EPIC DRAMA. By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan & Co. 7s 6d.

Arguments as to what present-day books will be hailed by posterity as masterpieces are as futile as those beloved of school debating societies, in which authors, ticketed and labelled like prize cattle, are ranged in an ascending scale of merit from Martin Tupper to Shakespeare. But if one had the courage to indulge in the game of prophesying which volumes printed inside the last ten years would be in high favour a century hence, one could hardly avoid making a claim for "The Dynasts," Mr. Hardy's epic drama, which, one is glad to see, has now been issued at a price that brings it within the reach of every lover of literature. It achieves greatness by the magnitude of its swelling theme—a panoramic vision of the welter of Europe during the last decade of the Napoleonic wars—and also by the fact that it marks the evolution of a new art form. We walk with Nelson the quarterdeck of the Victory amidst the flying splinters of wood and whistling balls from the mizzen-top of the Redoubtable; we see Napoleon, "plastered with mud and dribbling with rain water," urging his soldiers towards the bridges that lead from the Island of Lobau to the plateau of Wagram; we hear the Prince Regent bandying jokes with Sheridan; watch deserters from Sir John Moore's retreating army broaching wine casks in a cellar; catch a glimpse of the weary road from Moscow, with its layers of bleaching bones, and the ring of Cossacks closing like wolves round the lank spectres that represent the last of the grand army. Glittering points of light illuminate the turbid confusion of war and intrigue; where the historian merely dazzles one with battle-pieces and state ceremonies there echoes through these pages the still sad music of humanity. Mr. Hardy gives us infinitely more than picturesque snapshots—a philosophic unity binds all his scenes together.

He attains that mainly by the introduction of "supernatural spectators of the terrestrial action" in the shape of impersonated abstractions or Intelligences,

. . . . . .

It is a daring attempt in this age to invent new dramatic machinery, but Mr. Hardy's visualisation of these Phantom Intelligences, spirits of ironic laughter and tears, gazing down on the puppet-show of the world, is an artistic triumph such as it has been given to few to win

human forms." Historians to-day are as the sands of the sea in number, but one searches their pages in vain for a revelation of the irony and pathos of mortal happenings such as one finds in this wonderful book.

The Dynasts. Part III. American Reviews, etc. 23

New York Evening Post. April 18. '08

THE DYNASTS.

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Four years ago we gave a dazed and tentative notice to the first part of Mr. Hardy's huge closet drama. We were impressed by the fine martial stir of the piece,

Clamorque virum clangorque tubarum,

by the startling stage directions whereby the reader was deified into a spectator sitting above the clouds, beholding Europe far below stretched out on the map like "a great tiger," by the marching and countermarching of vast armies, but as the creeping of insects, and by the ghastly vividness of certain other annotations wherein a blind, inanimate will is seen stretching its tentacles through the destinies of millions of human puppets. Yet, as a whole, the first part seemed to us a *succès manqué*, a piece of imaginative incunabula, the characteristic product of a moody, or, as Mr. Hardy calls it, a "nervous and quizzical" age, a product which might some day, in an age of stronger artistic feeling, be made by another hand the basis of a masterpiece. On the appearance of the second part, two years later, we found ourselves still more deeply impressed with the things that were striking in the first part. We found, too, the philosophic adventure of the piece, the exhibition of the mutations of history as the operation of

Unmalliced, unimpassioned, nescient Will,

sweeping along with our admiration a kind of anxious interest that gave the poem power not only over our "nervous and quizzical" intellects, but even over our hearts. We began to suspect that we had not done justice to the first part. Now, with the publication of the third and last part, that suspicion has become a certainty. We have read the final volume with the complete absorption of every faculty, and going back from it to read again the first and second parts, with the original preface wherein the plan of the whole was laid down, we have become aware of a work marked, despite its superficial unevenness, by a colossal unity and a staggering significance—a fitting and in a way a triumphant climax to that long series of novels in which Mr. Hardy has embodied both his poignant knowledge of the world of men and his grim, undeluded philosophy.

The enterprise in "The Dynasts" is nothing less than a new justification of "the ways of God to man." For Mr. Hardy there was considerably more to justify

Whirled along by the spirit of war, the reader forgets for the moment the philosophic adventure in which he has engaged, but when the scene closes for the last time on the figure of the beaten and broken Napoleon weakly brooding on the edge of the bloody field, the questionings come thick; and in the "After Scene," which passes in "The Overworld," Mr. Hardy has prepared his most explicit answer, the final utterance of that virile philosophy that is the central force of his novels.

It would be easy to debate the propriety of the monstrous form that Mr. Hardy has chosen, to point out technical flaws in its execution, but it would be beside the mark here. When all is said, the reader feels that the monstrous form befits the monstrous subject, and that in an age too "nervous and quizzical" for the epic it could scarcely have been other. As to infelicities of detail, they should no more disturb us than swallow nests should disturb us, *pace* Lowell, on the façade of the "awful past." The answer to technical criticism of "The Dynasts" is: There it is; a complete and powerfully moving whole, the characteristic and significant climax to the lifelong work of a richly endowed man of letters; one who, given by nature a poet's imagination, toiled long in prose lest luring fancy lead him astray from human life as it is, yet never in his novels lost sight of the wheeling of the eternal stars over the sordid human scene, who towards the end of his life coming to treat a vast, long-meditated theme involving in its implication the whole body of his thought, slipped off the restriction of prose to express, if with an occasional unhabituated awkwardness, a vast poetic vision in a powerful and compelling poetic medium.

course upon it *sub specie æternitatis*. It is to them that we must turn for whatever poetry we may expect to find in the work, for only a scant fraction of its bulk is to be described as being poetry at all. Mr. Hardy's intellectual mastery is such that he can at times force poetry to his will, but the product is never quite without traces of the violence employed. We feel about him as we feel about Emerson and Whitman, that the stuff of poetry is in him, but coupled with the obstinate determination not to submit to its formal restraints. The poetical high-water mark of the entire work was probably reached in the comment of the Chorus of Pities upon the Walcheren expedition in Part II. (quoted in THE DIAL, May 16, 1906). Nothing quite equal to that in haunting and melancholy beauty is to be found in the volume now at hand. And yet there are single lines of infinite suggestiveness, such as the pathetic

"Disasters mostly have to do with me"

of the Empress Marie Louise; brief passages of biting force or amazing vision, such as these words of Davout at first sight of Moscow:

"What scores of bulbous church-tops gild the sky!
Souls must be rotten in this region, sire,
To need so much repairing!"

or these of the Spirit of the Pities upon the field of Waterloo:

"Between the jars
Of those who live, I hear uplift and move
The bones of those who placidly have lain
Within the sacred garths of yon grey fanes —
Nivelles and Plancenoit, and others nigh,
Where faith is vibrant still — through untold years.
Their dry jaws quake: 'What Sabaoth is this,
That shakes us in our unobtrusive shrouds,
As though our tissues did not yet abhor
The fevered feats of life?'"

Probably the finest long passage is offered by the last monologue of Napoleon, fleeing for his life after the final defeat of his insensate ambition. It is midnight, he is drowsing in the saddle, and the voice of the Spirit Ironic penetrates to his consciousness with the question:

"So I would ask, Ajaccian Bonaparte,
Has all this been worth while?"

Here is the monologue in full:

"O cursèd hour,
Why am I stung by spectral questionings?
Did not my clouded soul incline to match
Those of the corpses yonder, thou should'st rue
Thy saying, Fiend, whoever thou may'st be! . . .
Why did the death-drops fail to bite me close
I took at Fontainebleau? Had I then ceased
[illegible] unplumbed; had they but worked,
[illegible]-fold the glow of Hannibal
[illegible]aky lanes! — Is it too late? . . .
[illegible] death would smoke but damply here!
[illegible] cannon shot had met me
[illegible] stood: I should have scored
[illegible] in time.
[illegible]red me heat
[illegible]-day,
[illegible]yrrus, Saul,
[illegible] of death,
[illegible] elsewhere.
[illegible] in time
[illegible]god,
[illegible]y course
[illegible]ky
[illegible] throne.
[illegible] sinner?
[illegible]aces that consume themselves
This is my burnt-out hour."

[illegible]es which this closing section [illegible] deal with the Russian [illegible] passages of the Peninsular [illegible]defeat of Leipsig, the exile to [illegible]Belgian campaign that ended on

THE DIAL

CHICAGO, MAY 16, 1908.

THE DYNASTS.*

It is a century since the epos of the Napoleonic wars filled the thoughts of mankind, and we are now only beginning to understand the events of those portentous years, and to view them in their true historical perspective. It may well be that another century shall pass before men are able to view in true literary perspective, and to praise aright, the colossal drama which Mr. Thomas Hardy has consecrated to the Napoleonic theme. When the first section of "The Dynasts" was published, some four years since, the impression

The Napoleonic War, in short, was so imperfectly recorded by the poets who lived through its tremendous shock that we may fairly represent it as not recorded by them at all. Nearly a century was to pass before there should arise a poet who, on the huge canvas of 'The 'Dynasts,' for the first time would paint for us a panorama of the struggle not unworthy of its stupendous issues.

EDMUND GOSSE.

(From article in The Edinburgh Review, Jan 15, 1915 on "The Napoleonic Wars in English Poetry.")

Westminster Review May 1908

It is a little difficult to decide under what head to place Thomas Hardy's "Dynasts."[1] It is a drama, but not presentable on the stage. It is history, but given in a dramatic form. And the atmosphere of helpless subjection to the rule of "the Great Foresightless," in which everything takes place, would justify us in putting the book under the head of "philosophy." As, however, we can offer only a notice, and not a detailed criticism, we choose the head of "drama." And as a drama, conditioned by the author's claim that it shall be staged, not on the boards of a theatre, but in the reader's imagination, we do not hesitate to describe it as a very powerful production.

Much as Hardy has given us, for which we have been thankful, we are prepared to treasure his "Dynasts." as one of his best services to our literature. It is a work which deserves to be regarded as the necessary accompaniment of the study of the history of the period he illustrates. There has been an impression abroad that we are to regard this work as a kind of swan-song of Hardy's pen: but surely it is not. We dare to hope that now he has relieved his mind of what has been a serious project of many years, he will discover mental elasticity enough to add at least another to his list of fictions. We so seldom have Hardys amongst us that we are greedy to get what we can from them.

The Northern Whig Feb. 29th 1908

LITERATURE.

MR. HARDY'S "PANORAMIC SHOW."

THE DYNASTS: A DRAMA OF THE NAPOLEONIC WARS. Part III. By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan. 4s 6d net.

It is the boast of English literature that from its earliest days it has refused to be bound in the swaddling bands of conventional forms and academic methods, that its writers have never consented to work according to a formula. The boast is quite legitimate and proper, but it is an open question if that licence springs from a perception of the value of allowing an artist free play in regard of treatment or is merely the result of insensibility to problems of form. There has been plenty of toleration for men who have played fast and loose with generally accepted methods, but those who have said a new thing in a new way, such as Wordsworth, Browning, or Meredith, have received a cold welcome at the best.

Something of the same attitude may be seen in the reception given to Mr. Hardy's "Dynasts"—the final volume of which has now been published—though his position in the world of letters has assured him a respectful hearing. But the average man is not deterred by the authority with which the artist speaks, and he frankly confesses in his own phrase that he has "no use for" a drama of the Napoleonic wars in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes. He demands fiercely why Mr. Hardy cannot be satisfied with Wessex and employ his time in writing another story as good as "Tess" or "The Return of the Native." The critic who has advanced a little confines himself to pointing out that it would never suit the stage, a fact which the author has fully admitted, and deplores the lack of continuity in a drama that leaps from Moscow to the Peninsula, and from the Peninsula to Weymouth or Vauxhall Gardens, in the short space of an act.

But after the critics have said their say the book remains a new thing in literature, with nothing that one can well compare it to save perhaps the second part of Goethe's "Faust." There are readers who can see little in it save an orgy of senseless intriguing and stupid butchery, selfish diplomatists in quiet rooms pulling the strings, and men blowing out one another's brains at point-blank range, impaling their fellows on bayonets, or being trodden into shapeless masses under the hoofs of charging cavalry. It seems to them, as a critic used to say of sensational drama, "a case not for art, but for the police," and they turn away dazed and bewildered. But that is to forget the point of view which Mr. Hardy has taken and described so magnificently in his earlier [illegible]

The nether sky opens, and Europe is disclosed as a prone and emaciated figure; the Alps shaping like a backbone and the branching mountain chains like ribs, the peninsula plateau of Spain forming a head. Broad and lengthy lowlands stretch from the North of France across Russia like a grey-green garment, hemmed by the Ural Mountains and the glistening Arctic Ocean.

The point of view then sinks downward through space, and draws near to the surface of the perturbed countries, where the peoples, distressed by events which they did not cause, are seen writhing, crawling, heaving, and vibrating in their various cities and nationalities.

And the impetus that urges them, to which they give big names—honour, patriotism, duty, ambition, love—Mr. Hardy shows us as "the controlling Immanent Will," which appears in his vision "as a brain-like network of currents and ejections, twitching, interpenetrating, entangling, and thrusting hither and thither the human forms." One remembers Omar Khayyam:—

> We are no other than a moving row
> Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go,
> Round with the Sun-illumined Lantern held
> In Midnight by the Master of the Show.

That is an old idea of the philosophers, but instead of working it out in terms of a few obscure individual lives Mr. Hardy takes for his "panoramic show" Europe during one of the greatest convulsions in her history, and reveals what we dignify as world-shaking events as no more than a disturbance in an ant-hill, armies dwindling to "molluscs on a leaf," absurd generals in cocked hats waving toy swords [illegible] in stuffy cham[illegible] from which th[illegible] pause under dr[illegible] ironic, or pitif[illegible] comic blunder[illegible]

To achieve h[illegible] hesitate to ma[illegible] rally accepted [illegible] curtain up and [illegible] strive any wel[illegible] the verge of [illegible] personages li[illegible] talk in crude [illegible] reason Mr. S[illegible] "The Admira[illegible] time to write [illegible] regal disrega[illegible] edges.

These are o[illegible] severely take[illegible] ready, if he [illegible] or it may be [illegible] effects and c[illegible] and what a [illegible] he obtains [illegible] art of miniat[illegible] and nobody [illegible] scribe the m[illegible] in "The Fr[illegible] three volume[illegible] long drama [illegible]

France but of Europe during a decade of great happenings. And where the historian sees these things from the point of view of rulers and statesmen, Mr. Hardy presents them "sub-specie æternitatis."

The Napoleon of legend and romance is a notable figure, but in these pages the Nietzschean overman is diminished to a pin-point, and is equally with the weakest boy-conscript who cheers for "The Little Man in Grey" a puppet whom the Immanent Will moves to "Its inexplicable artistries." In this last volume one finds no longer the prancing hero of Austerlitz and Wagram. At Borodino one sees a red-eyed rheumatic figure, shifting its weight from one puffed calf to another as it sips hot grog and watches the columns fling themselves on the Shevardino redoubt. Then the deserter, scurrying across Prussia, while Kutuzof and his Cossacks harry the rear of the grand army, and the snow finishes those who escape the cruel lances. Afterwards, in quick succession, the unavailing three days' battle of Leipzig, the abdication, the return from Elba, and the Hundred Days, with as an afterpiece the wood of Bossu, where, the din of Waterloo still in his ears, the great Emperor rides off the stage to the cry of the Spirit of the Years.

> Such men as thou, who wade across the world
> To make an epoch, bless, confuse, appal,
> Are in the elemental age's chart
> Like meanest insects on obscurest leaves,
> But incidents and tools of earth's unfolding;
> Or as the brazen rod that stirs the fire
> Because it must.

And against Napoleon is set Wellington, serene and imperturbable, with his rolling oaths and bluff common sense. One catches a glimpse of him bending over a map in the Duke of Richmond's drawing-room with the cry "Napoleon has fooled me, by God he has," and one sees him the next day splashed with mire and blood, the sweat trickling down his face, rallying a wavering square or peering through the smoke for a sight of the German columns beyond Planchenoit. Yet Napoleon and Wellington are merely incidents. Their actions have as much or as little value as the crowds that we hear hooting the Prince Regent at the opera house or the Wessex peasants who are shown burning Napoleon in effigy, while the Durnover band, "which includes a clarionet, serpent, oboe, tambourine, cymbals, and drum, is playing 'Lord Wellington's Hornpipe.'"

When the volume is laid aside it is not what historians describe as the great moments that remain most vividly in the mind. What one remembers best may be the chatter of sentinels in the rain as they watch the ford near Salamanca, the wailing of stragglers from the Grand Army ploughing knee-deep through the snow "with icicles dangling from their hair that clink like glass-lustres," the crowds that jeer Bonaparte as he sets off for Elba, an odd snatch of a woman's song—

orthodox moralist. In the scene in the Overworld that ends the drama we catch in the speeches, choruses, and semi-choruses of the Spirits Sinister and Ironic, the Spirit of the Years, and the Spirit of Pities, a hint of something behind

> . . . the dreaming, dark, dumb Thing
> That turns the handle of this idle show.

It is more a vague aspiration than a definite hope, but the final chorus does hymn the belief that—

> When far-ranged æons past all fathoming
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The enterprise in "The Dynasts" is nothing less than a new justification of "the ways of God to man." For Mr. Hardy there was considerably more to justify than for Milton. The seemingly purposeless wars that made the rivers of Europe run red with blood and brought anguish to a million homes, were rather more stubborn facts to explain than a dim traditional "Fall." Napoleon, "The Christ of War," as Mr. Hardy audaciously calls him, was, too, a more vital and compelling figure than the fallen Prince of Darkness, while "The Great Foresightless" that he candidly substitutes for a benign anthropomorphic deity must be justified, if at all, not by the easy appeal to the age-old beliefs and devotions of the race, but only by the cooler, less persuasive methods of the pure reason. Yet in the end, though the justification is conditional and tentative, it lingers in the mind with an insistent and reassuring potency.

In this third part of "The Dynasts" the great panoramic spectacle of the Napoleonic wars draws splendidly to its tremendous close.

From the beginning of the sixth act in the famous ballroom at Brussels to the final scene in the wood of Bossu where Napoleon broods over his defeat, Mr. Hardy is at his very best, and in this kind outside of the chronicle plays of Shakespeare there is none better. The passion of the battle as it is uttered in the nervous Anglo-Saxon profanities of the generals, or reflected in the comments of the Intelligences that speak from the cloud [illegible] forms ranging from sapphics to [illegible]aux, fairly takes the reader by the [illegible]

Whirled along by the spirit of war, the reader forgets for the moment the philosophic adventure in which he has engaged, but when the scene closes for the last time on the figure of the beaten and broken Napoleon weakly brooding on the edge of the bloody field, the questionings come thick; and in the "After Scene," which passes in "The Overworld," Mr. Hardy has prepared his most explicit answer, the final utterance of that virile philosophy that is the central force of his novels.

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The three parts of "The Dynasts" comprise nineteen acts and one hundred and thirty scenes. The human characters are numbered by the hundreds, and to these are superadded the Phantom Intelligences that hover over the scene, and discourse upon it *sub specie æternitatis*. It is to them that we must turn for whatever poetry we may expect to find in the work, for only a scant fraction of its bulk is to be described as being poetry at all. Mr. Hardy's intellectual mastery is such that he can at times force poetry to his will, but the product is never quite without traces of the violence employed. We feel about him as we feel about Emerson and Whitman, that the stuff of poetry is in him, but coupled with the obstinate determination not to submit to its formal restraints. The poetical high-water mark of the entire work was probably reached in the comment of the Chorus of Pities upon the Walcheren expedition in Part II. (quoted in THE DIAL, May 16, 1906). Nothing quite equal to that in haunting and melancholy beauty is to be found in the volume now at hand. And yet there are single lines of infinite suggestiveness, such as the pathetic

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As though our tissues did not yet abhor
The fevered feats of life?'"

Probably the finest long passage is offered by the last monologue of Napoleon, fleeing for his life after the final defeat of his insensate ambition. It is midnight, he is drowsing in the saddle, and the voice of the Spirit Ironic penetrates to his consciousness with the question:

"So I would ask, Ajaccian Bonaparte,
Has all this been worth while?"

Here is the monologue in full:

"O cursèd hour,
Why am I stung by spectral questionings?
Did not my clouded soul incline to match
Those of the corpses yonder, thou should'st rue
Thy saying, Fiend, whoever thou may'st be! . . .
Why did the death-drops fail to bite me close
I took at Fontainebleau? Had I then ceased
This deep had been unplumbed; had they but worked,
I had thrown three-fold the glow of Hannibal
Down History's dusky lanes! — Is it too late? . . .
Yea. Self-sought death would smoke but damply here!

If but a Kremlin cannon shot had met me
My greatness would have stood: I should have scored
A vast repute, scarce paralleled in time.
As it did not, the fates had served me best
If in the thick and thunder of to-day,
Like Nelson, Harold, Hector, Cyrus, Saul,
I had been shifted from this jail of flesh,
To wander as a greatened ghost elsewhere.
—— Yea, a good death, to have died on yonder field;
But never a ball came passing down my way!

So, as it is, a miss-mark they will dub me;
And yet — I found the crown of France in the mire,
And with the point of my prevailing sword
I picked it up! But for all this and this
I shall be nothing. . . .
To shoulder Christ from out the topmost niche
In human fame, as once I fondly felt,
Was not for me. I came too late in time
To assume the prophet or the demi-god,
A part past playing now. My only course
To make good showance to posterity
Was to implant my line upon the throne.
And how shape that, if now extinction nears?
Great men are meteors that consume themselves
To light the earth. This is my burnt-out hour."

The seven acts which this closing section of the work comprises deal with the Russian expedition, the final passages of the Peninsular campaign, the defeat of Leipsig, the exile to Elba, and the Belgian campaign that ended on

*THE DYNASTS. By Thomas Hardy. Part Third. New York: The Macmillan Co.

the field of Waterloo. Many scenes of subordinate interest are interspersed, taking us, now to London, now to Malmaison, now to the Wessex coast, now to Vienna and Schönbrunn. The stage-directions are more amazing than ever, as the following examples witness:

"The unnatural light before seen usurps that of the sun, bringing into view, like breezes made visible, the films or brain-tissues of the Immanent Will, that pervade all things, ramifying through the whole army, Napoleon included, and moving them to Its inexplicable artistries."

"Thereupon a vision passes before Napoleon as he lies, comprising hundreds of thousands of skeletons and corpses in various stages of decay. They rise from his various battlefields, the flesh dropping from them, and gaze reproachfully at him. His intimate officers slain he recognizes among the crowd. In front is the Duke of Enghien as showman."

The imagination that stage-directed the second part of "Faust" did not transcend the possible to this extent. As for the Phantom Intelligences, the Spirits of Rumour, and of the Pities and of the Years, the Spirits Sinister and Ironic, they are present everywhere, commenting singly or in choral unison upon the scenes, as they are successively enacted upon the earthly stage.

If it is to these Phantom Intelligences that we must look for the poetry of Mr. Hardy's work, it is to them also that we must turn for its philosophy. As those who have read the earlier sections of the work already know, this is a philosophy that embodies the central doctrine of Schopenhauer — the doctrine of a blind, unconscious, and aimless will immanent in all things, and unwitting of any definite purpose. "Why prompts the Will so senseless-shaped a doing?" asks the Spirit of the Pities; and the Spirit of the Years makes answer:

"I have told thee that It works unwittingly,
As one possessed, not judging."

Whatever light the author has for the darkness of his fellow-men, perplexed by the seemingly meaningless tragedy of existence, must be sought in that impressive "After Scene" in the Overworld, when Europe is visible only in the dim distance, and the Phantom Intelligences alone occupy the stage.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS.

"Thus doth the Great Foresightless mechanize
In blank entrancement now as evermore
Its ceaseless artistries in Circumstance
Of curious stuff and braid, as just forthshown.
Yet but one flimsy riband of Its web
Have we here watched in weaving — web Enorme,
Whose furthest hem and selvage may extend
To where the roars and plashings of the flames
Of earth-invisible suns swell noisily,
And onwards into ghastly gulfs of sky,
Where hideous presences churn through the dark —
Monsters of magnitude without a shape,
Hanging amid deep wells of nothingness.
Yet seems this vast and singular confection
Wherein our scenery glints of scantest size,
Inutile all — so far as reasonings tell."

SPIRIT OF THE PITIES.

"Thou arguest still the Inadvertent Mind, —
But, even so, shall blankness be for aye?
Men gained cognition with the flux of time,
And wherefore not the Force informing them,
When far-ranged aions past all fathoming
Shall have swung by, and stand as backward years?"

Here may be noted Mr. Hardy's point of departure from the Schopenhauerian conception of the Will. With the German philosopher, the Will may attain to consciousness only in its individual objectification, and then only to the effect of an act of negation and consequent world-annihilation; with the English poet the Will may become conscious in its cosmic character, and acquire positive purpose wherewith to shape a more rational world. The distinction is fundamental. And thus the Will is invoked by the Pities in chorus:

"We hold that Thy unscanted scope
Affords a food for final Hope,
That mild-eyed Consciousness stands nigh
Life's loom, to lull it by and by."

The Spirit Ironic interposes a last objection:

"As once a Greek asked I would fain ask too,
Who knows if all the Spectacle be true,
Or an illusion of the gods (the Will,
To wit) some hocus-pocus to fulfil?"

And the final answer of the Pities is thus voiced:

"But — a stirring thrills the air
Like to sounds of joyance there
That the rages
Of the ages
Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair."

This, if less ecstatic in utterance, is at one with the Chorus Mysticus that brings "Faust" to its sublime close. It is the impressive last word to mankind of a spirit that has faced life steadily, swept all illusions from the field of its vision, and yet has preserved the faith to believe that the world-process may eventuate in an ultimate good.

WILLIAM MORTON PAYNE.

CHICAGO, ILL. POST
JUN 8 1908

Hardy's Experiment Complete.

With the third volume of "The Dynasts" Mr. Hardy's "drama of the Napoleonic wars" is brought to a close. The three parts, nineteen acts and 130 scenes are now completed, and it is possible to pass judgment on an artistic totality with what assurance one's critical modesty permits in the dealing with the work of a master.

A certain sad relief must be felt by the critic in realizing that had Mr. Hardy's experiment been less unsuccessful the critic's task had been more difficult. But this consolation is in turn almost balanced by a sense of the insufficiency of prompt judgment and the limitations of ordinary imagination when dealing with so large and complicated a work.

It must be accepted at once that "The Dynasts" is history in a species of shorthand, and the aesthetic value of the drama almost wholly depends upon one's easy familiarity with the vast material from which Mr. Hardy has chosen. "The Dynasts" therefore is likely to be at best a drama for historians or the comparatively few educated persons who are "up" in the Napoleonic period.

But even for this small circle certain aesthetic qualities must exist in the "drama" or it will fail, and it may be doubted that "The Dynasts" would even after repeated readings disclose a really dramatic structure, or contrive to achieve that development, suspense and resolution upon which dramatic effect depends.

One attentive and interested reader at least has failed to gain anything more than the interest of narrative, of successive comment, sometimes eloquent and suggestive, often far from impressive.

There is in fact hardly a line in the three volumes that can be correctly classified as poetry. There is, alas, a good deal of doggerel. There is some honest prose uneasily masquerading as verse. There are some passages of elevated, rhythmic prose, more nearly related to oratory than to poetry. But the style is not informed with poetic feeling. The imaginative source is not poetic, nor, by consequence, is the final result poetry in the most lenient interpretation of that magic word.

These aesthetic questions aside, "The Dynasts" proves an interesting summary of a great historical epoch, full of just comment and a philosophy worthy of our profounder mediations. One of the most suggestive parts is the last, in which the spirit chorus, or "phantom intelligences," as the author calls them, comment in the Overworld upon the drama which had been played before them, with Bonaparte as protagonist. What has Hardy, perhaps our only pessimist in the real sense of that mishandled term, to say of this great segment of man's struggle? What of the Immanent Will and its design? Does he still hold "It works unconsciously, as heretofore, eternal artistries in Circumstance"? The answer is not clear. Perhaps the last stanza of the epilogue, given to the Chorus of the Years, is hint enough:

But—a stirring thrills the air
Like to sounds of joyance there
That the pages
Of the ages
Shall be canceled, and deliverance
Offered from the darts that were,
Consciousness the Will informing, till
It fashion all things fair!

Is this the dim hope that goes hand and hand down into the shadow with Thomas Hardy? (The Macmillan Company.)

T. B.

Boston B. Beacon
April 4/08

AN APPEAL TO THOMAS HARDY.

Now that Thomas Hardy has completed his so-called world drama, "The Dynasts" it is to be hoped that he will realize that the reading public is waiting for another novel from his pen. The past five years, during which "The Dynasts" has appeared in three successive volumes, must have shown him that it is as a novelist and not as poet that he will be remembered, and that however much intellectual labor "The Dynasts" may represent, it would have fallen flat from the press had it not borne his name on its title page. We read it not for itself, but because it is the work of the great novelist in whom we have found keen delight for more than three decades of years. Columns and pages have been written about it, but we doubt if a single one of the thousands of reviewers who have attacked it have refrained from deploring the waste of Mr. Hardy's powers in the concoction of a drama that, no matter how original it may be, is commonplace and inferior. The same amount of time and thought spent upon it would have brought forth at least half a dozen novels that would have been read by thousands where "The Dynasts" is read by hundreds.

What, indeed, is the whole of "The Dynasts," with its nineteen acts and its one hundred and thirty scenes, and its many hundred characters, to one episode in "The Return of the Native" or "The Mayor of Casterbridge?" Its many historical personages and incidents take no such hold on the imagination as is taken by Tess Durbeyfield, Eustacia Vye, Gabriel Oak or Fancy Day. It is too ponderous to be convincing, too pretentious to be sincere, too long to be vividly dramatic. It is, in brief, not the Thomas Hardy that we have known ever since the day when "Far from the Madding Crowd" gave a new novelist to English literature: it is a new, an unknown and an unwelcome personality that we would willingly ignore and forget. Mr. Hardy is, to be sure, in his seventieth year, but he is still intellectually and physically active, and the wonderful Wessex that he has recreated in fiction still teems with many untold tales and many quaint characters of the sort that he alone can bring to life. Perhaps it is useless to urge his duty upon him, but, nevertheless, he should realize that the world is not willing to accept "Jude the Obscure" as his final word. Great as that novel is, he can write a still greater one.

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164 MERCVRE DE FRANCE—1-v-1908

— Thomas Hardy: *The Dynasts*, 3 vol., 6 s. ch., Macmillan.

Le vaste drame que Mr Thomas Hardy appelle **The Dynasts**, dont le troisième et dernier volume a paru récemment, prendra rang aussi parmi les œuvres les plus curieuses que nous offre la si fertile littérature anglaise. Le titre annonce un drame des guerres napoléoniennes, en trois parties, dix-neuf actes et cent trente scènes. Il nous est impossible de l'analyser ici en détail. Un pareil effort, de la part d'un homme tel que Mr Thomas Hardy, mérite plus de respect, et exige une lecture attentive, même de longues méditations. Il a fallu, pour créer cet œuvre gigantesque, une prodigieuse imagination, et si son ampleur déconcerte à l'abord, il offre des envolées vertigineuses qui en font une œuvre de génie. Prendre pour théâtre l'Europe entière, pour personnages, les nations qui s'entrechoquèrent pendant vingt ans et les hommes qui les conduisirent, interpréter une période des plus tumultueuses de l'histoire, transporter tour à tour la scène d'un bout à l'autre de ces immenses perspectives, faire parler Napoléon et un obscur laboureur en un grandiose contraste, interrompre la marche des événements pour intercaler les réflexions d'Esprits, spectateurs surnaturels du drame terrestre, abstractions personnifiées qui voient cette agitation d'un plan plus élevé, c'est là une tâche colossale qui demande au lecteur une bonne volonté, un courage sans défaillance, dont il est, au bout, récompensé. Sans doute, les vers de Mr Thomas Hardy peuvent paraître inférieurs aux admirables indications scéniques rédigées en prose; sans doute, la philosophie que quintessencient les Esprits semble bien pessimiste; sans doute, le tableau de ces luttes que l'auteur veut dynastiques et non nationales réclame, pour être aperçu dans son ensemble, un effort pénible, mais *The Dynasts* imposent, pour le génie de Mr Thomas Hardy, une admiration infinie.

Clipping from N. Y. TIMES.

MAY 2 1908

THE DYNASTS.

Thomas Hardy's Great Metrical Drama for Mental Performance Now Complete—A Work of Stupendous Conception and Noble Execution.

A VISION OF "THE IMMANENT WILL."

The Napoleonic Struggle from the Viewpoint of Supernatural Intelligence.

WHEN, four years ago, Mr. Hardy gave to a dazed world the first volume of a poetic drama which he announced would extend to three parts, nineteen acts, and 130 scenes, few were found to regard the enterprise otherwise than as the bizarre design of a once great writer's declining years. The form of the new work was indeed unprecedented in literature. It was a drama for mental performances only. The stage of action was much of the time in the sky, inhabited by certain impersonated abstractions or Phantom Intelligences—the Spirit of the Years, the Spirit of the Pities, the Spirit of Rumor, the Shade of the Earth, Spirits Sinister and Ironic, Recording Angels and Choruses of Spirits—supernatural spectators of the terrestrial drama, while the terrestrial dramatis personae numbered about 150 in the first part alone, among them being Napoleon, George III., Pitt, Fox, Nelson, Murat, the Emperor Francis, and the Empress Josephine. The intention of the work apparently was to tell the story of the great Napoleonic struggle from the standpoint of superior celestial intelligence. There were whole scenes consisting entirely of stage directions, or dumb show. The dialogue was indifferently in the mouths of Emperors, Wessex clowns, fashionable ladies of the Court, or bedraggled camp-followers; half the time the Recording Angel or a Chorus of Pities or of Spirits of the Years were speaking or singing. In the curious preface the author advanced the hazard that mental performance may be the fate of all drama other than that of frivolous life, and suggested a monotonous delivery of speeches, with dreamy, conventional gestures by figures behind screens or gauzes, which should blur all outlines.

The present reviewer was among the very few who believed that he discerned behind the unprecedented and bizarre form of Mr. Hardy's latest undertaking a conception worthy to be matched for daring against any enterprise of the human mind—an undertaking, moreover, which no one but Mr. Hardy, and he only in the ripe maturity of his experience alike of life and in literature, could have entered upon with any hope of escaping ludicrous fiasco.

The present review of the third and concluding part of "The Dynasts" (Macmillan) has been purposely delayed several weeks in order that any undue enthusiasm might have time to abate. The opinion here pronounced is, therefore, deliberate. That opinion is that "The Dynasts," now complete, must take its place as one of the noblest creations in literature. It is a work of colossal significance and staggering power. So far from being difficult or obscure, once the slight effort necessary to understand its form has been made, it is a piece of writing as clear, as easily followed, and as absorbing in its limpid course as any well-written novel. The magnitude and seriousness of its purpose (which is that of displaying the whole life of Europe, the life of ruler and peasant, from the year 1805 to 1815, and to display that multiform and variegated life in its complicated unity, as a manifestation of the unconscious restlessness of an Immanent World-Will) might be expected to overwhelm the imagination alike of author and reader, and to divest the earthly scenes recorded of their vitality, humor, pathos, and interest. This, however, is not the case. Mr. Hardy has nowhere, in his most realistic novels, pictured forth the actualities, even the small and mean or the humorous details of life, with greater vivacity. We see Napoleon taking snuff and sipping grog; we hear him coughing in his tent; we observe the vicar of Durnover twice remove his pipe from his mouth, spit perpendicularly, and twice speak; we hear the Leipsic clocks imperturbably strike 9 as the battle which is to decide the fate of Europe begins; we see the little King of Rome kicking in the arms of his attendant; we behold the remnants of the Grand Army, with icicles dangling from their hair and clinking like glass lustres as they walk, until they sink to freeze, crouching around fires, Sirius and Orion flashing like stilettos from above; we see a bowling dog with a white cockade tied to its tail cross the front of a royalist battalion at Grenoble; we march with soldiers; we tramp with the rabble camp-followers; we listen to the Emperor, to English statesmen, to London citizens and villagers, among them our old friend Cantle; we are present on the field of Waterloo with a sense of actuality which the best effort of Victor Hugo or of Stendhal comes not near of giving. There could not possibly be more intimate, realistic pictures of life—a more realistic picture of life—than is afforded in these thousand pages.

But the wonder of the work is not that. The wonder is in its sense of the unity of the human drama. This unity, in Mr. Hardy's conception, at least as set forth in this remarkable work, consists in the assumed fact that everything, all existence and all life, is a mode of an Immanent Will—a thing itself unconscious, insentient; an Inadvertent Mind; a Great Foresightless; a vast fermenting vat; "an automatic Sense, unweeting where or whence"; "a Knitter drowsed, whose fingers play in skilled unconsciousness." Of this unconscious Immanent Will, the human figures of the drama are the puppets, endowed with a false sense of their own importance and independence.

Mr. Hardy in this work tells the story of the Napoleonic episode as it has never been told, either in history or fiction, before. But he tells it only as an illustration of the fatuity of man's belief that he is free. "The Dynasts" is a drama the most terrible ever written of life's irony. Now it is the brute imbecility, now the bitter humor, of events. You watch the ambition of a man engulf a dozen nations and millions of individuals in catastrophe, and end in its own defeat. That makes a sentence. Fancy it expanded into three volumes of realism such as nobody but Thomas Hardy could write, and you get an idea of the vividness of the story. But you are never allowed to lose yourself in realization of the life of peasants or of rulers, of soldiers and seamen, in time of war, nor in the ordinary historic appreciation of the particular events of the Napoleonic struggle. On every other page you are summoned to a point of vision "far in the Unapparent," whence you behold armies crawling like caterpillars on the surface of an unperturbed and ancient globe. Or where you behold Europe as a prone figure of which the Alps form the vertebrae, and the branching mountain chains the ribs, the Spanish Peninsula forming the head of the écorché, the lowlands a gray-green garment half blown off, and the sea around a half disturbed bed on which the figure lies. Or whence you see an unnatural light fall upon the earthly scene, bring into view, like breezes made visible, filaments or brain tissues of the Immanent Will, ramifying through all things and all men, and moving them to its inexplicable artistries.

Such a thing was never before conceived by a writer of an imaginative story, nor put in such ghastly vividness by a pantheistic philosopher. The idea of a cosmic drama, of justifying the ways of God to men is, of course, not new. It was the idea in the mind of the writers of the Book of Job, and after a fashion in that of the author of "Faust," and of "Paradise Lost." The problem was big enough for Job; what he and his friends were concerned about was the relation of human actions to consequences—the question of rewards and punishments. It was big enough for the Greek dramatists, who debated the conflict of man's desire and Fate's designs. But this conception of a Fate which is unconscious of itself, which consists of that whose restless agony it itself decrees; this vision of history as the palpitation of the anatomy of a slumbering cosmic brain—has at all events not until now got itself into imaginative literature.

Look at it a moment on the field of Waterloo. The spectator is whirled from the very midst of the din and smell and profanity of the battle to the viewpoint of the Superior Intelligences.

A transparency, as in earlier scenes, again pervades the spectacle, and the ubiquitous urging of the Immanent Will becomes visualized. The grab [illegible]

[illegible] Duke Wellington as [illegible] rust, and shows him, like Hush, as [illegible] while discovering his intentions on [illegible] By the lurid light the faces of every row, square, group, and column of men, French and English, wear the expression of that of people in a dream.

In a second the strange light passes, and the fighters appear to move independently as before in scenes the most terribly realistic in literature. Never was battle so depicted as here. It may be more gory in the pages of Sienkiewicz, but is never so real. The scenes at Borodino, Vitoria, the bridge of the Beresina, the Thouberg windmill at La Haye Sainte—simply they are unequaled in the literature of war.

Wellington goes in the direction of the hussars with Uxbridge. A cannon shot hisses past.

Uxbridge. (starting.)
I have lost my leg, by God!
Wellington.
By God, and have you? I felt the wind o' the shot.

In this Part III. we see the career of Napoleon in a convulsed Europe draw to its close in the colossal tragedy whose main features are the burning of Moscow and the retreat of the Grand Army through the horrors of the Russian Winter, the battle of Leipsig, the abdication of the Emperor, Elba, the return, and Waterloo. The stage is enormous and heroic, but the whole vast play is seen in every corner and from every point of view at once in amazing particularity and with a remembrance of its part in the cosmic scheme. To Mr. Hardy, as to the Spirit of the Years, the fainting of a girl who watches at a Brussels window to see her lover march past to Waterloo is the same as the death of the Empress Josephine; the disappointment of the rustic who has tramped from Stourcastle to Casterbridge to see "Boney" burned, only to learn that the victim is but an effigy, is worth as much space as the emotions of the defeated Emperor as he drowses and mutters in the wood of Bossu as the moon sinks and "darkness blots out Napoleon and the scene."

The epilogue is in the Over-World. Assembled are the Spirit and Chorus of the Years, the Spirit and Chorus of the Pities, the Shade of the Earth, the Spirits Sinister and Ironic, and their Choruses, Rumors, Spirit Messengers, and Recording Angels. The continent of Europe, an emaciated figure on its uneasy bed, is seen far below, and the Intelligences are debating the eternal question. The Spirit of the Years is speaking:

Thus doth the Great Foresightless mechanize
In blank entrancement now as evermore
Its ceaseless artistries in Circumstance
Of curious stuff and braid, as just forthshown.
Yet but one flimsy riband of Its web
Have we here watched in waving—web Enorme,
Whose furthest hem and selvage may extend
To where the roars and plashings of the flames
Of earth-invisible suns swell noisily,
And onwards into ghastly gulfs of sky,
Where hideous presences churn through the dark—
Monsters of magnitude without a shape,
Hanging amid deep wells of nothingness.
Yet seems this vast and singular confection
Wherein our scenery glints of scantiest size,
Inutile all—so far as reasonings tell.
But the Spirit of the Pities hazards the question,
Thou arguest still the Inadvertent Mind—
But, even so, shall blankness be for aye?
Man gained cognition with the flux of time,
And wherefore not the Force informing him,
When far-ranged aeons past all fathoming
Shall have swung by, and stand as backward years?

The other Intelligences join in the debate. And here is the end of it—strangely, very strangely, indeed, for those who have marked the darkening fatalism of Mr. Hardy's philosophy—in a lyric of the Choruses of the Years and the Pities, rising at a note of full hope and of joy in the hope that the gloom of slumbering consciousness in the world-being shall break at last into beneficent intelligence.

SEMICHORUS I. OF THE YEARS.
(Aerial music.)

Lest as first the question rings
Of the Will's long travailings:
Why the All-never,
Why the All-ever
Ever urges on and measures out the
doubting time of Things,

SEMICHORUS II.

[illegible]

VARIÉTÉS

Un drame napoléonien de Thomas Hardy

C'est encore le Wessex, cadre habituel de ses romans qui a indirectement suggéré à M. Hardy l'idée de son dernier ouvrage, un drame formidable en prose et en vers, trois parties, dix-neuf actes et cent trente scènes, intitulé « *The Dynasts* ». Les souvenirs de la fameuse descente avortée de Napoléon sont, paraît-il, très vivants encore dans le sud de l'Angleterre. D'autre part, M. Hardy nous apprend dans sa préface qu'il était depuis longtemps surpris de ne voir jouer à sa patrie qu'un rôle trop secondaire dans les histoires traitant de cette époque. Il a été ainsi peu à peu amené à concevoir une sorte de vision gigantesque, assez analogue à celle du saint Antoine de Flaubert où la grande épopée du commencement du dix-neuvième siècle tiendrait tout entière et se déroulerait sous la forme de scènes et de tableaux. Ces tableaux n'ont du reste entre eux d'autre lien que la préoccupation constante de montrer l'Angleterre, champion de la justice et de l'humanité, enserrant peu à peu et anéantissant dans ses mains implacables la gloire inutile et coupable de son grand rival. Un pareil sujet fournissait à M. Hardy l'occasion de célébrer une fois de plus ces qualités d'énergie concentrée et sombre, de muette ténacité, d'idéalisme religieux si caractéristiques à la fois de sa race et des personnages de ses romans. D'autre part, son immense étendue et les larges masses d'humanité qui s'y déploient lui permettaient de ne considérer les faits historiques que du haut de sa philosophie pessimiste et désenchantée. Ce drame forme ainsi en quelque sorte le couronnement de son œuvre, la complète et l'explique.

La forme qu'il lui a donnée adapte de manière assez ingénieuse ces tendances philosophiques aux nécessités d'une action dramatique. Le lecteur, qui est supposé spectateur, contemple le plus souvent la confuse mêlée des agitations humaines du haut d'une sorte d'observatoire appelé l' « Overworld » ou au-delà. Près de lui des êtres symboliques regardent aussi et expriment sur ce qu'ils voient des réflexions appropriées à leur caractère. L'Esprit des Années ne s'étonne plus de rien ; l'Esprit de la Terre n'a pour tout ce qui se passe qu'une indifférence dédaigneuse et lourde. L'Esprit Sinistre se réjouit des massacres et des calamités, l'Esprit d'Ironie les assaisonne de plaisanteries cyniques, le chœur des Pitiés, enfin, qui se divise souvent en deux demi-chœurs alternatifs, se désole, s'attendrit, espère en l'avenir, cependant qu'un ange historiographe prend note des événements, explique les batailles et nous met au courant des faits.

La philosophie de M. Hardy dont le fond, comme pour celle d'A. de Vigny, est une sorte de pessimisme dédaigneux et stoïque a ceci de particulier qu'il ne la donne nullement pour définitive dans la condition inachevée du monde. Pour l'Esprit des Années « la volonté immanente se sert inconsciemment des circonstances comme de matériaux pour des œuvres d'art et les dessins qu'elle forme avec elles semblent être le seul but que se propose son indolence... Elle a tourné son attention vers d'autres mondes, car elle est fatiguée de celui-ci. » Les Pitiés répondent au contraire au morne découragement et à l'ironie douloureuse par des cris d'amour et de confiance. A la place de tyrans égoïstes et destructeurs comme Napoléon « nous voudrions, disent-elles, ceux dans la nature desquels entre plus de tendresse et qui sont habiles dans l'art des belles compassions ». Lorsque la splendeur impériale s'éteint comme un feu d'artifice et que l'Europe rentre dans l'obscurité, les Pitiés se demandent pourquoi la Force irresponsable se plaît à ces jeux absurdes et vains et se disent qu'il n'en sera pas toujours ainsi. S'adressant « à celui que la nature proclame et qui précipite les tyrans de leur trône » : « Nous croyons, chantent-elles dans un hymne final, que ton insondable bienveillance légitime notre espoir suprême et que ta conscience au doux regard se tient près du métier où se tisse la vie pour, peu à peu, venir [illegible]. » Il est intéressant de noter cet [illegible] assez nouveau chez M. Hardy [illegible] pour donner tout son sens et toute sa beauté à l'effort magnifique de l'Angleterre luttant avec un tranquille entêtement pour le triomphe futur de l'humanité contre un de ces caprices déconcertants de la Volonté incohérente qui gouverne encore notre univers.

Les scènes que commentent ainsi ces Intelligences se déroulent avec la netteté éblouissante d'un cinématographe. Tantôt c'est l'Europe qui se déploie sous nos yeux « comme une silhouette penchée et maigre ; les Alpes s'allongent ainsi qu'une épine dorsale dont les côtes sont formées par les contreforts », tantôt c'est la chaîne minuscule des carrosses qui emmènent en France Marie-Louise et sa suite « tandis que la surface de la terre semble se mouvoir dans une direction opposée » ; tantôt nous prenons pied sur la terre elle-même, dans l'entrepont d'un navire, dans la Chambre des Communes, dans la salle de banquet où Napoléon offre une rose à la reine de Prusse défaillante qui lui demande Magdebourg. Souvent la scène entière ne se compose que d'indications de décor ou de brusques et saisissantes visions de cavaliers au galop, de navires qui s'abordent, de ponts qui s'écroulent sur la Bérésina. Voici Walcheren, par exemple, lugubre pantomime d'une régulière beauté dans son réalisme concentré : « Les rayons horizontaux qui viennent de l'Ouest s'étendent comme les gerbes dorées par dessus la vapeur que la chaleur du jour a tirée du sol embué... d'étranges relents de poisson traînent, alternativement tièdes ou froids. Des bulles cuivrées et opalescentes, où se mélangent plusieurs gaz, s'élèvent de l'endroit où le pied en passant a foulé l'humidité... une grande armée est campée ici et sur les terrains découverts manœuvre l'infanterie, — des hommes-squelettes dont quelques-uns sont rouges et d'autres grelottent et que l'on tient en haleine parce qu'il est dangereux de rester tranquille. A chaque instant un d'entr'eux tombe à terre et on l'emporte dans un hôpital sans toit où on l'étend sur la terre nue... on entend dans l'air des bruits légers. »

Les dialogues historiques forment la partie de beaucoup la plus faible du drame proprement dit. Ils sont ennuyeux parce que forcément conventionnels, parce que les personnages qui y prennent part sont trop près de nous, trop liés à notre vie par les mille associations familières suggérées par les monuments, les traditions de famille, les bibelots partout rencontrés et que la moindre page du Mémorial ferait bien mieux notre affaire. La plus belle fiction poétique ici nous paraît inférieure à n'importe quel petit fait précis. C'est surtout lorsque Napoléon est en scène que ce mélange d'histoire et d'épopée nous choque, et nous nous habituons difficilement à l'entendre s'exprimer en héros shakespearien. Sans doute, un lecteur anglais éprouve-t-il à un moindre degré ce sentiment de profanation. Le Napoléon de M. Hardy est pour nous d'autant plus manqué qu'il s'attache à lui enlever toute vie individuelle en ne négligeant aucune occasion de le représenter comme un météore inconscient lancé par une force irresponsable. Nous ne trouvons plus rien d'humain dans cet homme qui « sourit d'un air rusé en faisant briser la glace sous les fuyards d'Austerlitz », et qui, dans la déroute de Waterloo, se console dans un un long monologue oratoire en songeant « que les grands hommes sont des météores qui se consument eux-mêmes et que voici venue l'heure de son extinction ». Quant au milieu vivant où sa grandeur prend racine et se fortifie, à ce peuple enivré qui se presse autour de son piédestal, il n'en est guère fait mention. La France, encore une fois, n'occupe dans le drame qu'un rôle secondaire. Le vieux grenadier de nos bas-reliefs et de nos gravures n'apparaît qu'une fois pour maudire l'empereur en tombant sur les neiges. Quant au peuple de Paris qui ne demande qu'à être amusé, il suffira de redorer le dôme des Invalides pour l'empêcher d'être indiscret lorsqu'il apprend l'anéantissement de la Grande Armée.

Par contre l'auteur a su évoquer avec une extraordinaire vérité l'Angleterre de l'époque. Qu'il nous montre le prince de Galles, gros garçon embarrassé dans la complication de ses fredaines, fuyant sa femme pour tomber dans les bras de la Fitzherbert qui le poursuit aussi ; des paysans du Wessex brûlant en effigie « Boney » retour de l'île d'Elbe, un traînard de Waterloo, s'écriant qu'on n'a pas vu de charge pareille depuis l'époque des Amalécites et comparant la mort de Sir Thomas Picton à celle du Philistin Goliath, ou des gentlemen causant au club du mariage de Napoléon qu'ils viennent de lire dans les gazettes, on sent partout ce réalisme naturel et sûr que donne seule une sympathie profonde avec le milieu où se meuvent les personnages. Comme sur un fond aussi net, dans une atmosphère aussi vivante les héros se détachent bien ! Voici Nelson qui refuse de quitter son uniforme d'amiral, point de mire de toutes les balles et ne se préoccupe que d'une femme qu'il vient de voir frappée. Lorsqu'on lui annonce que le marin qui l'a mortellement blessé vient de tomber à son tour il s'écrie : « Ce n'était pas la peine ! C'était sans doute un homme qui dans sa simplicité et sa bonne foi s'efforçait de servir son pays. Qu'il repose en paix ! Et que sa femme, ses amis, ses enfants, s'il en a, puissent supporter leur perte et se consoler du chagrin que je leur cause ! » Quant à Wellington, dont les victoires tiennent tant de place qu'il n'en reste plus pour la campagne de France, cet homme « solide, lent, laborieux » comme les lignes de Torres-Vedras, n'est-il pas l'Angleterre elle-même avec son calme mépris des fanfaronnades, son héroïsme fait de longue patience et de tranquille obstination, son inébranlable confiance dans les desseins de Dieu et les destinées de sa race ?

L'impression générale que l'on emporte de la lecture de ce drame gigantesque est en somme assez confuse. Dans l'ensemble, il déconcerte et donne le vertige. L'idée générale autour de laquelle se groupe cette multitude de scènes et de tableaux est trop souvent perdue de vue dans ces passages soudains d'un bout de l'Europe à l'autre ou du milieu d'un champ de bataille au sommet de l'au delà. Surtout les figures centrales se noient dans ces multitudes qui s'agitent comme des fourmilières et ce n'est que çà et là que nous les voyons émerger. Même les traits qui devraient se réunir pour composer une physionomie distincte de ce protagoniste qu'est l'Angleterre, si frappants qu'ils soient, pris isolément, sont trop espacés pour se grouper harmonieusement. Pas plus que dans bien d'autres œuvres considérables de la littérature anglaise, il ne faut chercher ces qualités de proportions et de composition qui sont pour nous des conditions habituelles de la beauté artistique. Mais l'auteur a sans doute volontairement cherché à reproduire dans son œuvre la confusion et le chaos où lui apparaît le monde. Et, dominés peu à peu par son impassibilité, l'énergie constante de son expression poétique, la longueur même du drame qui ressemble à un défi, nous nous sentons à la fin pénétrés d'admiration pour cette volonté réfléchie qui force notre attention et méprise notre étonnement.

MAURICE LANOIRE.

LA PHALANGE

84, Rue Lauriston
PARIS
Oct 15 1908

Les Dynastes de Thomas Hardy[1]

Le sous-titre du grand ouvrage de M. Thomas Hardy provoque fatalement le rire du vulgaire. C'est une pierre de touche : j'ai laissé, pendant plusieurs semaines, ces trois volumes sur ma table, à la vue de tout venant. Il y eut une hiérarchie d'esprits, trois classes de gens ; ceux qui m'interrogèrent curieusement sur le contenu des « *Dynastes* » ; ceux qui, après s'être un peu amusés des « dix-neuf actes » et des « cent trente scènes », demandèrent des explications ; et enfin ceux qui éclatèrent de rire et parlèrent des comédies chinoises, dont la représentation dure plusieurs jours, et où les spectateurs apportent leur déjeuner. Un peu du ridicule de Thomas Hardy rejaillissait sur moi ; j'en étais assurément très flatté.

Mais le malignum vulgus n'exprime pas seulement en particulier ses opinions ; il faut qu'il les porte à la connaissance du monde entier par la voie de la Presse Quotidienne. Là, il trouve des interprètes parmi les critiques soi-disant *littéraires* des salles de rédaction. C'est à ces porte-parole des Philistins que nous devons ces ridicules « opinions de la presse » dont les éditeurs anglais barbouillent les pages finales des ouvrages qu'ils publient. Or, même lorsqu'il s'agit d'une œuvre de génie, les louanges données par ces ignorants présomptueux sont aussi écœurantes que leurs plus grossières injures. Il apparaît clairement que, pour ces critiques là, les chiens crevés et l'actualité en général ont bien plus d'importance que les plus belles œuvres d'art. Mais laissons de côté les cent mille sottises qui furent écrites à propos de la nouvelle œuvre de M. T. Hardy, et essayons de décrire cette œuvre dans son ensemble, maintenant que nous l'avons, complète, devant nous.

Qu'on imagine, d'abord, la structure des drames historiques de Shakespeare adaptée aux évènements de l'histoire de l'Europe

(1) Drame des guerres napoléoniennes en trois parties, dix-neuf actes et cent trente scènes. Trois volumes ; Londres, Mc Millan et Cie. 1904-1906-1908.

entre 1805 et 1815. Le lieu de l'action change presque à chaque scène ; nous passons, à chaque instant, « par un mouvement d'une rapidité non moins grande que celle de la pensée »(1), des palais royaux aux champs de bataille, des places publiques aux solitudes de la campagne, du camp français au camp anglais, comme dans la « Première Partie de Henri VI » par exemple. Les dialogues en prose alternent avec les scènes en vers blancs ; à intervalles presque réguliers, des chœurs ; çà et là, une chanson populaire.

Mais là s'arrête cette ressemblance. En effet, d'une part dans les « Histoires » de Shakespeare, le personnage royal dont le nom sert de titre au drame joue le principal rôle ; on le suit de son avènement à sa mort. Dans les « Dynastes », sans doute, Napoléon est la figure la plus importante, mais il n'est pas à proprement parler le centre de l'action. Ainsi, dans le plan primitif des « Dynastes » (publié à la fin du Tome 1er), il y avait une avant-dernière scène de l'acte VII, dernière partie, intitulée « Rochefort » : nous devions donc accompagner l'Empereur déchu jusque sur le pont du « Bellérophon » ; mais, après Waterloo, son rôle étant fini, Napoléon avait cessé d'être un Dynaste, et la scène promise, jugée inutile par l'auteur, n'a pas été faite. D'autre part — et là nous perdons tout point de ressemblance avec toute forme littéraire connue — le drame des Dynastes, qui n'a été écrit que pour être « *joué mentalement* », place le spectateur dans une région supra-terrestre, à des distances plus ou moins grandes de l'Europe et de l'Océan. De ces hauteurs, grâce à des indications scéniques *qui sont de splendides descriptions*, écrites dans la meilleure prose de M. Thomas Hardy, nous voyons les longues armées ramper le long des fleuves, s'engager dans les défilés des montagnes, s'étendre ou se resserrer selon le relief géographique, ou bien ce sont les flottes qui font de petites taches blanches sur une nappe d'eau verte qui est l'Atlantique. Le point de vue s'abaissant, nous assistons à des scènes muettes, plus précises : nous distinguons les couleurs des uniformes, les visages des soldats. Enfin nous sommes sur la terre, et nous voyons les

1. Shakespeare ; Heuri V, acte III, chœur.

états-majors, leurs escortes, et tous les personnages historiques du temps; nous les entendons parler. Ainsi nous passons d'un champ de bataille à une fête chez la marquise de Salisbury, et de la chambre de Fox au boudoir de l'Impératrice Joséphine. Et soudain nous remontons dans le monde supérieur, au-delà des nuées. Quelqu'un m'a parlé, à ce propos, d'art *cinématographique*.

Mais nous ne sommes pas seuls dans ce monde supérieur : nous y entendons les hymnes de certains esprits, qui sont les « spectateurs surnaturels du drame terrestre » (1) et qui, parfois se mêlent, comme les divinités d'Homère, à l'action. Mais M. T. Hardy se défend bien d'avoir emprunté ces « Esprits » à la mythologie grecque ou au merveilleux chrétien. Même, il nous demande de ne croire à leur existence que provisoirement; ce sont des « abstractions personnifiées » : l'Ombre de la Terre, l'Antique Esprit des années, l'Esprit des Rumeurs, le Chœur des Années, l'Esprit des Pitiés, l'Esprit Ironique.

Entre les différentes phases du drame, ces « Intelligences — Fantômes » expliquent en vers les doctrines philosophiques de M. Thomas Hardy. Nous les connaissons ces doctrines; elles viennent çà et là gâter certains chapitres de « Tess d'Urberville », et elles servent de conclusion à « Jude l'Obscur ». C'est le pessimisme de Schopenhauer; une explication du monde certainement ingénieuse, mais qui semble si stérile, si dépourvue d'espérance et de beauté, qu'on a peine à concevoir qu'elle ait jamais pu séduire un artiste tel que M. Thomas Hardy. On peut dire qu'il est artiste malgré ses opinions philosophiques. Et il tient fort à ces opinions. S'il avait à décrire lui-même son drame, c'est par là qu'il commencerait. Il nous dirait à peu près ce qui suit. La vie de l'univers n'étant que l'expression d'une volonté souveraine parfaitement inconsciente, l'Improvidence, tout le drame humainement inexplicable des guerres de l'Empire semble mettre bien en relief l'inconscience de cette volonté. Ainsi, les Dynastes, c'est-à-dire les Rois et les Empereurs héréditaires qui poussent leurs armées vers les grands car-

1. Préface des « Dynastes », tome I. p. VII.

gering significance—a fitting and in a way a triumphant climax to that long series of novels in which Mr. Hardy has embodied both his poignant knowledge of the world of men and his grim, undeluded philosophy.

Enter the Spirit and Chorus of the Years, the Spirit and Chorus of the Pities, the Shade of the Earth, the Spirits Sinister and Ironic with their Choruses, Rumors, Spirit-messengers, and Recording Angels.

Europe has now sunk netherward to its far-off position as in the Fore Scene, and it is beheld again as a prone and emaciated

nages historiques, ne sont que les parties d'un seul tout, la Volonté-Inconsciente. Ainsi, lorsque l'Esprit des Pitiés a gémi sur ces égorgements inutiles, lorsque l'Esprit Ironique a raillé l'inutilité de ces égorgements, l'Esprit des Années les réduit au silence en leur dévoilant pour un instant l'« action de la Volonté » ; l'Univers apparait alors au regard des Intelligences Surnaturelles sous la forme d'un cerveau mis à nu et rendu transparent dans lequel les armées et leurs chefs ne sont que des molécules agitées de mouvements contraires. Tout cela permet à M. Thomas Hardy de manquer de respect à la Cause des Causes. On sait que M. Thomas Hardy a une querelle personnelle avec Dieu. Ici quel plaisir n'éprouve-t-il pas à employer, en parlant de Celui qui Est, le pronom *neutre* de la troisième personne ! Et quelle joie, pour lui, de troubler nos pauvres notions humaines, de nous faire paraître l'enthousiasme ridicule et le courage militaire méprisable, et de nous donner à entendre que toute la vie de l'humanité n'est qu'une mauvaise comédie composée par un mauvais Auteur.

Craignant que nous ne perdions de vue cette explication de l'Univers, (que son scepticisme ne lui permet pas de considérer comme définitive) le dramaturge nous la fait répéter sans cesse par le Chœur de ses Esprits. C'est en effet dans cette explication que réside l'unité symbolique du drame. Mais vraiment cet éternel colloque des Intelligences, repris à tous les actes, devient vite monotone. Nous préférons nous rapprocher de la Terre, nous dépouiller de cette indifférence philosophique, et partager les sentiments de ces atomes perdus dans le tissu vivant de la Volonté, — ces atomes qui sont les Hommes.

Et justement, en dépit, je le répète, de toute sa philosophie, M. Thomas Hardy sait bien partager et exprimer les sentiments des hommes qu'il nous fait voir. Les hymnes métaphysiques supprimés, son drame perdrait sans doute en unité et en profondeur, mais l'intérêt purement humain qui lui resterait encore attaché suffirait à en faire une grande œuvre.

Au début, le lecteur, dégoûté par la forme trop souvent imparfaite, peut redouter une longue suite de scènes historiques à peine aussi vivantes que les récits ou les mémoires qui ont servi

à les construire. Mais peu à peu, une fois admis le prosaïque et maladroit vers blanc de M. Hardy, la sympathie s'éveille, et l'enthousiasme va grandissant jusqu'à la scène finale. Car il est nécessaire de lire au moins une fois l'œuvre entière d'un bout à l'autre, si l'on veut en comprendre le mécanisme. Le groupement des scènes et des actes est admirable; on peut, dans un même acte, passer d'Angleterre en Autriche et de Russie en Espagne, l'intérêt demeure toujours attaché à un certain ensemble de faits et d'idées, grâce auxquels tout se tient et s'enchaine. Du reste, tous les personnages *vivent*. Et arriver à les faire vivre ainsi était chose difficile. M. Hardy ne cherche pas à nous présenter certains de ces personnages sous un aspect nouveau; il ne nous montre pas un « Napoléon inconnu », ou une Marie-Louise insoupçonnée des Historiens. Et en même temps, ces grands rôles de l'Histoire n'ont pas, ici, le masque tout conventionnel, que nous avons l'habitude de leur voir porter, dans les manuels et dans les romans. Ils *existent*. Mais comment ? C'est, en grande partie, le secret du génie de M. Thomas Hardy. Comme les grands historiens classiques, il fait dire à ces personnages ce qu'ils auraient vraisemblablement pu dire dans telle ou telle circonstance donnée. Et, même lorsque leurs propres paroles sont arrivées jusqu'à nous, comme c'est le cas pour Fox, Pitt, Sheridan, etc. (et souvent pour Napoléon lui-même) M. Hardy, en paraphrasant le texte qu'il a sous les yeux, en supprimant les digressions et les longueurs, en forçant un peu (à peine) le ton, nous donne une impression de réalité singulièrement nette. Bref, il est un des plus attrayants portraitistes d'histoire qu'on puisse trouver, et pourrait sur ce point soutenir la comparaison avec Tite-Live.

Mais les gens du commun, la foule obscure, la grande plèbe sans nom des soldats, les déserteurs de l'armée anglaise d'Espagne, les paysans du Dorsetshire, tous vivent aussi, et à tous M. Hardy donne, sans l'épuiser jamais, sa pitié féconde. En ce sens, les scènes I et II de l'acte III, deuxième partie, sont un des plus beaux morceaux de la littérature anglaise : ce sont les propos échangés par quelques traînards et quelques déserteurs de l'armée anglaise (pendant la retraite de Sir John Moore) dans une

couthness, by a colossal unity and a staggering significance—a fitting and in a way a triumphant climax to that long series of novels in which Mr. Hardy has embodied both his poignant knowledge of the world of men and his grim, undeluded philosophy.

Enter the Spirit and Chorus of the Years, the Spirit and Chorus of the Pities, the Shade of the Earth, the Spirits Sinister and Ironic with their Choruses, Rumors, Spirit-messengers, and Recording Angels.

Europe has now sunk netherward to its far-off position as in the Fore Scene, and

maison abandonnée, près d'Astorga. Ce sont de jeunes paysans enrôlés pour cette guerre ; ils sont là, geignants, malades, sales, presque tous ivres, et accompagnés de leurs maîtresses, des Espagnoles qui ont fui les villes prises par les Français. Au milieu de cette orgie triste, entre des jurons et des hoquets, ces malheureux laissent échapper de vraies plaintes d'enfants abandonnés, et des regrets de leur pays, exprimés si naïvement que je crois bien n'avoir pas trouvé, parmi tout ce monde, de plus honnêtes gens que ces déserteurs : « ..... Ah ! ce que je voudrais être de retour chez nous, en Angleterre, là où il y a de la boisson à la vieille mode, et un vrai Dieu Tout-Puissant, au lieu de c'te sempiternelle Femme avec l'Enfant ; oui, chez nous, adossé au vieux pont de Bristol, et pas de discussions, et le bon soleil d'hiver éclairant de biais Baldwin Street, comme dans le temps !..... » — Voilà, dit l'Esprit Ironique, voilà le véritable romanesque de la Guerre (1). L'entrée soudaine de Napoléon, grognant et crotté, dans cette même maison ; la terreur de ces ivrognes dont aucun ne trouve en soi-même assez de courage pour assassiner l'Empereur ; les ordres brefs du chef ; son rapide commentaire sur la conduite des Anglais en Espagne :

« Des débauchés,
« Ces Anglais, comme tous les peuples hypocrites » ;

tout cela a quelque chose de vraiment sublime, — et tant pis si la vérité historique est un peu faussée !

Elle est vraiment très peu faussée, dans « Les Dynastes ». Car notre poète connaît en érudit l'histoire du Premier Empire. Dès son enfance sa curiosité fut attirée vers cette période. Ses « Poèmes du Wessex », et cette charmante idylle, « Le Trompette-Major » montrent bien quelles furent toujours ses préoccupations. Il s'est imprégné de l'esprit de l'époque qu'il a si bien pénétrée, et c'est pour cela qu'en lisant son drame on croit respirer l'air même du temps. Certes les documents ne manquaient pas à M. Hardy ; on pouvait même craindre que trop d'érudition ne gênât son inspiration. Mais il a su choisir en artiste

1. Il suffit de signaler ici le haut intérêt que présente une étude comparée des « Dynastes » et de « Guerre et Paix ». Il y a, entre les deux génies de M. Hardy et de Léon Tolstoï de frappantes ressemblances.

parmi ces documents. Les détails abondent dans les « Dynastes », mais ce sont des détails *connus*. M. Hardy a évité, là aussi, de nous apprendre du nouveau. Mais les images qu'il fait passer devant nous, demeurent gravées dans notre esprit, nettes et vraies comme des souvenirs personnels. Ah ! cette noble scène d'orage, encore, quelques jours avant Wagram, sur une route, aux environs de Vienne. Dans un carrosse ruisselant de pluie, l'Impératrice d'Autriche et la jeune Archiduchesse Marie-Louise fuient la Capitale menacée par l'armée française. Les deux femmes parlent de Napoléon sans le nommer. « Peut-être aurions-nous mieux fait de rester », dit Marie-Louise. « Pourtant, quand il arrivera, la canonnade sera terrible ». Cette phrase, on croit l'entendre.

Mais ce choix des matériaux, ce discernement qui écarte de grands faits comme le bombardement de Copenhague et toute la campagne de France, cette ordonnance transcendante, sont souvent influencés par la thèse générale de M. Hardy. Pour lui, les guerres de l'Empire furent « artificiellement provoquées » par l'ambition de quelques chefs de Dynastie. Dès lors, les conséquences de ces guerres, notamment « l'éveil des nationalités » passent au second plan. Et voilà pourquoi Bailen, et Saragosse et Gérone, qui tiennent tant de place chez les historiens espagnols et qui ont inspiré à Benito Perez Galdos ses meilleures pages, ne figurent pas dans le drame de M. Hardy. Ce furent des réactions nécessaires, mais accessoires. Cette thèse est bien connue, et M. Hardy ne nous la présente pas comme une nouveauté, non plus d'ailleurs, que l'opinion, à laquelle il adhère, et d'après laquelle l'Angleterre ne fit que continuer, sous le Consulat et sous l'Empire, la lutte commencée au XVIIIe siècle contre la France en tant que puissance économique. Dans les « Dynastes » M. Hardy a, pour la première fois dans un ouvrage non historique, fait au rôle joué par l'Angleterre pendant cette période la place très importante qui lui est due. Inutile de répéter ici que M. Hardy est le plus impartial des historiens.

Mais revenons enfin au poète. On a écrit que la prose des Scènes Muettes et des descriptions était admirable, et cela est bien vrai. Mais on a écrit, aussi, que les vers blancs, — et les

couthness, by a colossal unity and a staggering significance—a fitting and in a way a triumphant climax to that long series of novels in which Mr. Hardy has embodied both his poignant knowledge of the world of men and his grim, undeluded philosophy.

The enterprise in "The Dynasts" is no-

Enter the Spirit and Chorus of the Years, the Spirit and Chorus of the Pities, the Shade of the Earth, the Spirits Sinister and Ironic with their Choruses, Rumors, Spirit-messengers, and Recording Angels.

Europe has now sunk netherward to its far-off position as in the Fore Scene, and it is beheld again as a prone and emaciated

« Dynastes » en comportent des milliers, — étaient détestables, et, par malheur, cela n'est pas absolument faux. On est allé jusqu'à dire, dans une des meilleures études qui aient paru sur les » Dynastes » : « Ces vers nous rapprochent beaucoup de cette espèce de poésie qui n'appartient pas à la littérature, et qui, précieusement gardée dans de gros cahiers manuscrits, représente les loisirs de quelque médecin ou de quelque curé de campagne qui aurait fait, en cachette, une timide cour aux Muses ». Mais non, cela n'est qu'une première impression. La vérité, c'est que M. Hardy a su se libérer (aux dépens de l'harmonie parfois) du *ton poétique*, et qu'il a écrit délibérément, en une prose solide, toute pleine de beautés en tant que prose, mais prosodiquement rythmée. Quant à renouveler l'attaque sur l'imperfection générale de la langue de Thomas Hardy, c'est bien inutile, et la question me semble avoir été vidée par Lionel Johnson, dès 1892. (Cf. Lionel Johnson : « The art of Thomas Hardy » : surtout p. 75). Oui, M. Hardy écrit fort mal, c'est entendu, mais il dit ce qu'il veut dire, et bien des auteurs, qui écrivent très bien, n'ont jamais eu rien à nous dire.

M. Hardy qui a maintenant soixante huit ans, jouit de l'enviable privilège d'être encore discuté, malgré sa gloire, dans son pays, et d'être parfois même éreinté comme un débutant. Ce fut longtemps le cas de Baudelaire chez nous. Cette longue jeunesse des œuvres est un heureux signe. De temps en temps, il se trouve un aimable évêque pour répéter, dans une Revue trop grave, que « Tess d'Urberville » est un livre complètement immoral. Tant mieux. M. Hardy peut se dire avec tranquillité que ses œuvres vivront longtemps. L'immoralité des « Dynastes » est moins apparente, pourtant Je crois même que le Drame épique de M. Hardy dépasse l'intelligence moyenne des évêques anglicans. Enfin, on l'admire, ce Drame, ou bien on n'ose pas ne pas l'admirer, dans certains milieux qui se croient littéraires. Car le génie finit toujours par s'imposer, même lorsqu'il écrit mal. Et puis, qu'importe à Thomas Hardy l'opinion de la foule ? Il a pour public l'Elite, ici comme en Angleterre. Et il n'y pas d'autre Public.

VALÉRY LARBAUD.

death professor of Persian and Arabic at the Collège de France. For a while he had been attached to the French legation in Persia. He is the author of a "Dictionnaire turc-français" and other books on Oriental subjects. Hartwig Derenbourg, who was born in 1844, died in Paris April 13. He was a chevalier of the Légion d'honneur, and distinguished otherwise by various titles and offices. In 1889-1900 he edited the fourth part of the "Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum," and he has also to his credit a long list of philological and biographical works dealing with Arabic subjects.

THE DYNASTS.

The Dynasts, a Drama of the Napoleonic Wars. In three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes. Part III. By Thomas Hardy. New York: The Macmillan Co. $1.50 net.

Four years ago we gave a dazed and tentative notice to the first part of Mr. Hardy's huge closet drama. We were impressed by the fine martial stir of the piece,

Clamorque virum clangorque tubarum,

by the startling stage directions whereby the reader was deified into a spectator sitting above the clouds, beholding Europe far below stretched out on the map like "a great tiger," by the marching and countermarching of vast armies, but as the creeping of insects, and by the ghastly vividness of certain other annotations wherein a blind, inanimate will is seen stretching its filaments through the destinies of millions of human puppets. Yet, as a whole, the first part seemed to us a *succès manqué*, a piece of imaginative incunabula, the characteristic product of a moody, or, as Mr. Hardy calls it, a "nervous and quizzical" age, a product which might some day, in an age of stronger artistic feeling, be made by another hand the basis of a masterpiece. On the appearance of the second part, two years later, we found ourselves still more deeply impressed with the things that were striking in the first part. We found, too, the philosophic adventure of the piece, the exhibition of the mutations of history as the operation of

Unmalicèd, unimpassioned, nescient Will,

enlisting along with our admiration a kind of anxious interest that gave the poem power not only over our "nervous and quizzical" intellects, but even over our hearts. We began to suspect that we had not done justice to the first part. Now, with the publication of the third and last part, that suspicion has become a certainty. We have read the final volume with the complete absorption of every faculty, and going back from it to read again the first and second parts, with the original preface wherein the plan of the whole was laid down, we have become aware of a work marked, despite its superficial uncouthness, by a colossal unity and a staggering significance—a fitting and in a way a triumphant climax to that long series of novels in which Mr. Hardy has embodied both his poignant knowledge of the world of men and his grim, undeluded philosophy.

The enterprise in "The Dynasts" is nothing less than a new justification of "the ways of God to man," a theodicy more ambitious than for Milton. The seemingly purposeless wars that made the rivers of Europe run red with blood and brought anguish to a million homes, were rather more stubborn facts to explain than a dim traditional "Fall." Napoleon, "The Christ of War," as Mr. Hardy audaciously calls him, was, too, a more vital and compelling figure than the fallen Prince of Darkness, while "The Great Foresightless" that he candidly substitutes for a benign anthropomorphic deity must be justified, if at all, not by the easy appeal to the age-old beliefs and devotions of the race, but only by the cooler, less persuasive methods of the pure reason. Yet in the end, though the justification is conditional and tentative, it lingers in the mind with an insistent and reassuring potency.

In this third part of "The Dynasts" the great panoramic spectacle of the Napoleonic wars draws splendidly to its tremendous close. In the first act, from our station in the clouds we observe the cautious warfare of Wellington in Spain, and the disastrous Russian campaign of Napoleon. The scene is set for colossal tragedy. Yet even more than in the preceding parts the action is humanized by the racy human talk of soldiers and camp followers, by the telling exhibition, not only of the horrors, but of the sordidness, the discomforts, the humors of war. Then in successive acts we have the battles of Vitoria and Leipzig presented with a union of imaginative vision and technical understanding that is an education in military tactics; the abdication, the sojourn in Elba, the return, and finally in the last two acts the great concluding catastrophe of Waterloo. From the beginning of the sixth act in the famous ballroom at Brussels to the final scene in the wood of Bossu where Napoleon broods over his defeat, Mr. Hardy is at his very best, and in this kind outside of the chronicle plays of Shakespeare there is none better. The passion of the battle as it is uttered in the nervous Anglo-Saxon profanities of the generals, or reflected in the comments of the Intelligences that speak from the clouds in verse forms ranging from sapphics to rondeaux, fairly takes the reader by the throat.

Whirled along by the spirit of war, the reader forgets for the moment the philosophic adventure in which he has engaged, but when the scene closes for the last time on the figure of the beaten and broken Napoleon weakly brooding on the edge of the bloody field, the questionings come thick, and in the "After Scene," which passes in "The Overworld," Mr. Hardy has prepared his most explicit answer, the final utterance of that virile philosophy that is the central force of his novels. The scene opens with the last of the panoramic stage directions, which have been throughout one of the most effective *poetic* factors of the work:

Enter the Spirit and Chorus of the Years, the Spirit and Chorus of the Pities, the Shade of the Earth, the Spirits Sinister and Ironic with their Choruses, Rumors, Spirit-messengers, and Recording Angels.

Europe has now sunk netherward to its far-off position as in the Fore Scene, and it is beheld again as a prone and emaciated figure of which the Alps form the verte-

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execution, but it would be beside the mark here. When all is said, the reader feels that the monstrous form befits the monstrous subject, and that in an age too "nervous and quizzical" for the epic it could scarcely have been other. As to infelicities of detail, they should no more disturb us than swallow nests should disturb us, *pace* Lowell, on the façade of the "awful past." The answer to technical criticism of "The Dynasts" is: There it is; a complete and powerfully moving whole, the characteristic and significant climax to the lifelong work of a richly endowed man of letters; one who, given by nature a poet's imagination, toiled long in prose lest luring fancy lead him astray from human life as it is, yet never in his novels lost sight of the wheeling of the eternal stars over the sordid human scene, who towards the end of his life coming to treat a vast, long-meditated theme involving in its implication the whole body of his thought, slipped off the restriction of prose to express, if with an ocasional unhabituated awkwardness, a vast poetic vision in a powerful and compelling poetic medium.

The Pioneer Jan. 15th 1910

TIME'S LAUGHING STOCKS.

LONDON, DECEMBER.

WHEN I write a recent article on the season's verse, Mr. Thomas Hardy's book of poems, *Time's Laughingstocks* (Macmillan, 4*s.* 6*d.* net) had not been published. If it had been, it would have been interesting to compare the spirit animating its pages with that of the posthumous work of George Meredith then noticed. The two veteran novelists and poets of an age already past had something akin in their different creeds. They both find in nature their consolation, or more than consolation, something approaching to religion. They both love the centre of sincerity, simplicity and feeling in man. The genius of both is intensely dramatic, seeking always the most poignant mood, and striving to express it nakedly in the most poignant words. But there was a joyous optimism in the older man which we find but seldom in the younger. Meredith seems to have held a more hopeful creed: his verse is seldom disconsolate. Mr. Hardy has his gay moments, and sweet tender and placid intervals; but more frequently his verse is tinged with a tragic irony, a sense of the vainness of things, of the transience of joy, of the brittleness of love, of the loneliness, the weariness, the bitterness, that are left to age:

—I speak as one who plumbs
Life's dim profound,
One who at length can sound
Clear views and certain,
But—after love what comes?
A scene that lowrs,
A few sad vacant hours,
And then the curtain.

More than this there is here, not infrequently express, an exceeding bitter cry as of reproach at God and the Universe?—

. . . . . we creatures censure you
For shaping griefs and ills untold."

He puts the riddle of the universe over and over again, returning always to Micah's answer: "It shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine." His mood is often bitter. He describes himself—

"A thinker of crooked Thoughts upon Life in the sere,
And on That which consigns men to night after showing the Day to them.

We feel almost that he sums up the philosophy of the book in the title—thinking with the cynics that men after all are but Time's Laughingstocks.

Yet we should not call the book radically unhappy when there is so much in it of bravery, of the stoicism which faces the music, of the consolation which finds a chastened joy in looking at Reality between the eyes. There is here more of W. E. Henley than of Meredith. In the poem "To Sincerity," we have this spirit of the Stoic who finds an austere joy in suffering and knowing:

O sweet sincerity!—
Where modern methods be
What scope for thine and thee?

Life may be sad past saying,
Its greens for ever graying,
Its faiths to dust decaying;

And youth may have foreknown it,
And riper seasons shown it,
But custom cries: "Disown it;"

'Say ye rejoice, though grieving,
Believe, while unbelieving,
Behold, without perceiving!'

—Yet would men look at true things,
And unilluded view things,
And count to bear undue things,

The real might mend the seeming,
Facts better their foredeeming,
And Life its disesteeming.

In this chastened hope let those who seek their philosophy in poetry find a mitigated consolation. For my part I find it more cheerful and more profitable to make use of a philosophy of my own; and to go to poetry for what gives us pleasure in poetry, that is to say its poetical qualities. And if we go to Mr. Hardy's last volume with this intention we shall be sufficiently rewarded. I cannot but think that with his *Wessex Poems*, his *Dynasts*, and this volume to his credit, Mr. Hardy will be esteemed as highly as a poet as he is as a novelist. This book is full of haunting and lovely passages. Mr. Hardy is a master of our English metres. The time varies with every poem, and with every melody he scores a new success. He is singularly rich in poetical imagery, and startles us almost to crying out with the sudden freshness and aptness of a word or phrase. There are, of course, echoes of other poets, experiments in the manners of other men. But in the main we have here the real Thomas Hardy, of Wessex, and the novels, with melody and rhythm of his own, a quite extraordinary power over his metrical instrument. His subjects, when they are not "crooked thoughts upon life in the sere" are usually connected with his own Wessex; and the pick of the book to my thinking are the poetical tales and ballads of country life in which we recognise our own prince of story-tellers once again. They are dramas concentrated to the last degree, charged in every word with the dramatic spirit. I know few things in modern literature more moving than "Sunday Morning Tragedy," the tale of a mother who killed her daughter in the attempt to hide her guilt. "A Tramp Woman's Tragedy" would be called a sordid police court story if we saw a prose account of it in a newspaper—two vagabonds and their doxies, high words, a drawn knife, and a noose. But this squalid material becomes transfigured by the breath of genius into a work of art for which one might safely predict immortality. It begins with the very essence and spirit of vagrancy:

From Wynyard's Gap the livelong day,
The livelong day,

This is perhaps the most intense moment in the book; but there are many other things which are hardly inferior. These poems grip and hold us: the very names of the places have a moving quality in them:

"Beside the Mead of Memories,
Where Church-way mounts to Moaning Hill."

And even what seem to the common eye only the squalid actualities of life are illumined and transfigured by that rare and strange quality of genius, and become sermons in eternal matters. They are like a puddle in the road which yet serves as a mirror for the moon and stars and the infinite gulfs of the sky.

ligious and the unmoral nature has been "said in rhyme" and fiction, Mr. Hopkins has given to his theme a new turn. To begin with, his pagan is introduced as a gazer at his own cenotaph, constructed while he idly let himself be considered at the bottom of the sea. The priest, too, is unusual in having a Jewish strain which impels him to leave the loved church of his founding and preach Christianity to the Jews. Further, the heroine is a girl with a talent for whistling and, unknown to her parents, exercises it on the vaudeville stage. And finally the action takes place in the Bronx, whose local color—how changed since Hopkinson Smith's revealings of the French restaurant!—still affords in artist hands ample room for the showing of beauty, crowded though beauty may be by rushing civilization. Of this chance Mr. Hopkins makes the utmost, setting the idyllic features of his picture against the

ship and look back, compared with the glory of America, where all races come to labor and look forward."

If America has done anything for an American, it ought to have made him helpful and hopeful toward mankind, especially the poor and oppressed; but science to-day comes to the assistance of democracy and finds the lyric cry of brotherhood in the laws of nature:

"Open thy gates, O thou favored of Heaven,
Open thy gates to the homeless and poor.
So shalt thou garner the gifts of the ages—
From the Northlands their vigor,
The Southlands their grace,
In a mystical blending of souls that presages
The birth of earth's rarest, undreamable race."

PERCY STICKNEY GRANT.

North American Review
April 1912
Review of "The Dynasts"

THOMAS HARDY'S "THE DYNASTS"

BY THOMAS H. DICKINSON

THE first part of Thomas Hardy's *The Dynasts* was published in 1904. The third and concluding part appeared in 1908. So far the work has been received in silence. There are two possible alternative reasons for this apparent indifference. Either it is to be referred to the negligible value of the work itself or it represents a tendency in our age, often seen in the past, to leave to the future the discovery of our masterpieces. The author of this paper accepts the latter explanation, and the study that follows depends upon the thesis that *The Dynasts* is an art creation of the first magnitude judged by the standards of the ages.

Of all projects of art the one of greatest scope is that which is derived from an impulse to create an art-world interpretative of "things entire." To such a project the greatest minds of all time have turned. Homer and Virgil, Dante and Goethe, because they succeeded in this, are given first place in the lists of earthly creators. Sometimes these efforts are thrown into epic form, sometimes into dramatic form. Whether epic or dramatic, their primary essential is an impression of representative magnitude.

It has been found that the way in which such a work, epic or dramatic, may represent the rotundity of things in large is through the treatment of a Great Period or Epoch in human history. It is further found that this period is usually typified by a popular Superman, compounded often of historical and legendary elements, and instinct with the characteristics of the period. So we have in epic Æneas and Arthur, Roland and Beowulf, part person and part abstraction, and blended of historical and mythological elements. Turning to drama we find similar characters representing the same kind of social formula. Prometheus, Tamburlaine, Paracelsus, and Faust are magnified human

figures representative through great drama of great epochs.

It must be remembered that none of the works of which

Madison, Wisconsin

with the homage of the

writer

Thos. H. Dickinson

droit divin et du droit populaire. Mais Mr. Hardy les a choisis surtout de façon à dresser l'Angleterre devant Napoléon, comme son adversaire le plus constant, le plus convaincu, le plus inébranlable. Cette conception, qui permet à Mr. Hardy de nous montrer divers aspects curieux de la vie anglaise, les misères du vieux roi George III, aveugle et fou, les sottises

melody he scores a new success. He is singularly rich in poetical imagery, and startles us almost to crying out with the sudden freshness and aptness of a word or phrase. There are, of

Wessex Poems, his *Dynasts*, and this volume to his credit, Mr. Hardy will be esteemed as highly

figures representative through great drama of great epochs.

It must be remembered that none of the works of which these figures are the heroes stops with the exposition of a single person or epoch. From the lesser they go on to the interpretation of the greater; and all of the figures we have mentioned are subordinated to the exposition of the cosmical "point of view" of the author.

In these points of view there is a certain uniformity. Greek drama began with a note of philosophical symbolism. There was more to the drama than the story it told. The tomb ritual from which many of the dramas were presumably derived gave to most of them a sense of overhanging doom. Particular factors appear in certain plays. The spirit of human sympathy is strongly present in "The Trojan Women" of Euripides, and Æschylus, most cosmical of all dramatists, argues probably for the first time the case of humanity *versus* the gods.

Later times no less show examples of the drama of world meanings. The Chronicle Plays of England were Epoch Plays, and in "Hamlet" and "Lear" Man is the interest as truly as is the name hero. With German, English, and French romanticism, Epoch tragedy came into its own. "Wallenstein" and "Wilhelm Tell," "Marino Faliero," "Manfred" and "Cromwell," and, in a class by itself, "Faust," are plays in which the cosmos is expounded through the lens of an era.

Goethe's theory of "Faust" was that it should be a *Divina Tragedia*. Writing to its author, Schiller said: "In short, the demands upon 'Faust' are at once philosophical and poetic, and, turn as you will, you will find that the very nature of the object forces on you a philosophical treatment of the matter and your imagination will have to resign itself to the service of the philosophical idea." For these words Schiller received the grateful thanks of the poet. "Faust" treats humanity through the symbol of a German Reformation University. "The Divine Comedy" treats humanity through the symbol of Medieval faith. Byron's "Manfred"—compounded of the Staubbach, the Jungfrau, and Byron himself—treats humanity through the symbol of an age run mad with romanticism.

As between the drama and the epic the advantage for the treatment of majestic themes has always been on the

side of the epic. Drama, of which the basic theory presupposes possible production, has for this reason lacked the magnitude which would give to the art the impressiveness of grandeur appropriate to its subject. These limitations we find dramatists striving to correct. From the earliest times dramatists combined plays in series in such a way as to secure surface magnitude. "The Oresteia" of Æschylus, the greatest Epoch drama of the ancient world, is in three parts—the "Agamemnon," the "Choephori," and the "Eumenides." Marlowe's "Tamburlaine" and Dryden's "Conquest of Granada" are in ten acts.

All of these plays are built upon the theory of performance. When we come to "Faust" we reach a new step in the history of Epoch Drama. With modifications the first part of "Faust" may well be played. Performance of the second part, though it has lately been undertaken, can hardly be considered to be in accord with the essential nature of the part. Goethe wrote the second part of "Faust" for the same reason for which Milton wrote his epic, "to vindicate the ways of God to man." Milton had added "Paradise Regained" to his first epic; the "Paradise" of Dante had followed the "Inferno"; "Prometheus Unbound" had supplemented "Prometheus Bound." Apparently finding it impossible to complete his scheme within the limits of practicable drama, Goethe cast aside these hindrances and wrote in the form of Dramatic Epic.

This brings us to the form of drama to which we have just referred. An Epoch Drama is a dramatization of an era for the purposes of performance. A Dramatic Epic is the combination of the forms of epic and drama; it is really an epic thrown into dramatic form, with all the characteristics of drama—dialogue, concrete setting, objectivity—impressed into the service of the epic intent. There are reasons for believing that drama is more in accord with the genius of modern art than is epic. In the dramatic structure of the two parts of "Faust" there is included all that before had been found in epic. The difference that this feat effected in the epic was that the action was made dramatic rather than narrative; the difference that it made in the work as drama was only that it could not be played.

After all, why not Dramatic Epic if Lyrical Drama is accepted? Epic and drama have come near together before in the history of art. Milton cast "Paradise Lost" into

dramatic form before he finally chose the epic form. And his is the last great unmixed epic. So close are the forms of epic and drama in the "Book of Job" that no critic is certain to which class it belongs.

The last great period in human history worthy of an epic and untreated is the Napoleonic era. This period is not only French. It belongs to all civilized nations. It is, in Hardy's words, "a great historical Calamity or Clash of Peoples." As such it is the story of the intense years at the beginning of the nineteenth century, when all the peoples of Europe were settling themselves into adjustment for what we know as the modern era.

It is the Dramatic Epic of this period and of Napoleon, who is its Superman, that Hardy writes. Goethe himself, in "Egmont" and "Die Natürliche Tochter," essayed to express within the regular limits of drama, the spirit of unrest that led up to the French Revolution; but learning his lesson from that writer's "Faust," Hardy throws his drama onto the larger stage of epic. It is well to keep these things in mind in reading *The Dynasts,* for in this work Hardy has provided all the technical machinery of the epic. No work of late years has so thoroughly indicated the principles which underlay its composition and outlined its own critical standards. In writing *The Dynasts,* Hardy has systematized his thinking on the abstruse principles of art and has formulated the code of his own cosmic philosophy. Though it is aside from the point, one feels justified in mentioning the importance of this work in expounding the spirit and philosophy of Hardy's novels. Hereafter no one can read these works understandingly except through the medium of this, perhaps his last, work. No less, of course, do these principles serve to explain the action of the work before us; and through this drama they constitute Hardy's contribution to the philosophy of our time.

There is a certain appropriateness in the fact that Hardy, the descendant of Nelson's flag captain, should have written the drama of the Napoleonic wars. It was in the arms of Captain Hardy that the great Admiral lay when dying, and the names of the two have always been joined. The later Hardy also was personally drawn to the topic through the fact that it was toward his famous Wessex that "Boney" first turned his attention when in the days of his victory

he dreamed of English conquest. Out of the memories of that time, culled from survivors in his youth, one of Hardy's novels, *The Trumpet Major,* and several of his sketches and short stories are derived.

Hardy presents his formal apology for *The Dynasts* in the Preface to the first volume. In this he is chiefly concerned with two points—the question of his supernatural machinery upon which his philosophy depends, and the question of stage production. Hardy encourages the theory of Dramatic Epic above expressed by showing that production was as far as possible from his idea, as indeed it was from Goethe's in the case of the second part of "Faust." Production the work will receive, according to Hardy, but only in the mind of the reader. This theory lies at the basis of the plastic theater, both for stage and reading plays, and is responsible for the freedom that we find in Shakespeare's practical plays, as well as in "Faust" and the "Brand" and "Peer Gynt" of Ibsen, for instance. In the mind of the reader, the stage can be changed as often as necessary. So each act has innumerable scenes. Scenes follow each other as they would before an all-seeing eye, not geographically nor according to the necessities of the scene-shifter. In this way the scene becomes increasingly a part of the action. To gain this effect Hardy makes his exposition of scene-setting very clear and explicit. Some of his best descriptive prose is put into the provision of a setting that elucidates the action, for he would not be Hardy if he were not as much concerned with the Nature from which Man springs as he is in Man himself.

Pushing this point further, Hardy questions whether the reader's imagination is not one of the most important factors of a great play. He would have a play not only appeal to the imagination, but depend upon it. He writes:

> "A panoramic show like the present is a series of historical 'ordinates' (to use a term in Geometry). The subject is familiar to all; and foreknowledge is assumed to fill in the curves required to combine the whole gaunt framework into an artistic unity."

While disclaiming any intention to intrude in problems in which he lays claim to no mastery (though in stagecraft he is a master), Hardy suggests his wonder whether mental performance may not eventually be "the fate of all drama other than that of contemporary or frivolous life."

As *The Dynasts* is not written to be performed, Hardy

casts away entirely the ancient limitations as to act form. Irregular as is the second part of "Faust," Goethe still maintains the five-act division of classical memory. But Hardy is careful only to make his acts dramatic units. So he has six acts in each of the first two parts and seven acts in the third. There is no doubt that he would have been willing to have ten had they been necessary.

It is in the treatment of his supernatural machinery that Hardy most stands upon his own feet; and in this he has made his greatest contribution to this type of art. As has been seen, it was the purpose of earlier writers to vindicate, according to the accepted theology, the ways of the gods to men. It is clearly not Hardy's purpose to vindicate anything, mundane or supramundane. The aerial figures even of "Faust," some of which are Greek and some of Hebrew origin, are presented with the sanction of reverence. But in Hardy's opinion such heavenly figures are not germane to the genius of modern thinking. Our times, thinks Hardy, are too skeptical to permit a highly evolved spiritual machinery. He writes, "The meditative world is older, more invidious, more nervous, more quizzical, than it once was." For this reason he provides a series of ethereal beings who shall be as nearly as possible "the modern expression of a modern outlook." He asks for these not reverence of faith or worship, but simply, in the words of Coleridge, "that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith."

The metaphysical machinery and its cosmogony are further made clear in the words of the Spirits and Choruses in the body of the work. The central essence of the whole scheme of the universe is the Immanent Will, fabric of modern philosophy. The Immanent Will is a blind, unconscious force. "It works unconsciously . . . eternal artistries in circumstance." It is precise and inevitable. There is no way to swerve its destinies—

> "Which thinking on, yet weighing not its thought,
> Unchecks its clock-like laws."

There is no evidence of conscious plan in the universe:

> "Nothing appears of shape to indicate
> That cognizance has marshaled things terrene."

The Will lies outside of time; it is eternal.

> "The Will has woven with an absent heed
> Since life first was; and ever will so weave."

droit divin et du droit populaire. Mais Mr. Hardy les a choisis surtout de façon à dresser l'Angleterre devant Napoléon, comme son adversaire le plus constant, le plus convaincu, le plus inébranlable. Cette conception, qui permet à Mr. Hardy de nous montrer divers aspects curieux de la vie anglaise, les misères du vieux roi George III, aveugle et fou, les sottises

All the events and circumstances of the world's history are

> "—fibrils, veins,
> Will-tissues, nerves, and pulses of the Cause,
> That heave throughout the Earth's compositure."

All men live under the sway of the Will. The great man is he who discerns the workings of the Will and works with it. But even he, like lesser men, has no choice.

Around the Immanent Will, Hardy gathers several "impersonated abstractions, or Intelligences, called Spirits." The importance of these lies in the fact that in them Hardy has catalogued all of the attitudes from which men view the problem of living in the world. These Spirits are spirits of a conventionalized commentary, each Spirit commenting on the action of the play from its particular point of view. The first of these, the Spirit of the Years, lies nearest to the heart of the Immanent Will. It is this Spirit that is "an accessory of Its works Whom chance has rendered conscious. One may suppose that with this Spirit Hardy has most artistic sympathy, for of all the commenting Intelligences this is the one that is least likely to fall into error, as it refuses to judge and is unable to pity or to scorn. "'Tis not in me to feel with or against these flesh-hinged manikins" the Spirit of the Years announces—

> "But only through my centuries to behold
> Their aspects, and their movements, and their mold."

By their nature all the other Spirits are partisan spirits. Of these the Spirit of the Pities represents the attitude that is best known in literature, the spirit of the sympathetic observer of the sorrows of human fate. This Spirit, as Hardy explains, approximates to what Schlegel called "the universal sympathy of human nature—the spectator idealized" of the Greek Chorus. As such the comments of this Spirit are in the temper of the Chorus of Greek plays, concerning themselves with lamenting the cruelty of the Will, or, as Æschylus would have said, "the gods." A typical expression of this attitude of the Pities is given in the form of a quotation from Sophocles placed in the mouth of the Spirit of the Pities at the death of Nelson:

> "Such gross injustice to their own creation
> Burdens the time with mournfulness for us,
> And for themselves with shame."

The other Spirits, the Spirits Sinister and Ironic, represent attitudes that are indicated in their names. They are opposite to the Spirit of the Pities. Where the latter Spirit finds sorrow in broken ties, maladjustments, and discords, these Spirits see only cause for sardonic smiles or open laughter. "Hence we've rare dramas going," the Spirit remarks apropos of the Will's heedlessness. To the Spirit of Pities this drama seems tragedy, but to the Spirit Sinister the drama is comedy. In temper it is the "Iago of the Incorporeal World," but Hardy is careful to show that even this spirit is not responsible for pain. When the Spirit once speaks in glee of its past scourges the Spirit of the Years answers—

> "Thy Lisbon earthquake, thy French Terror. Wait
> Thinking thou will'st, thou dost but indicate."

Next to these Spirits there is the Spirit of Rumors, an earth-bound spirit, that moves among men, unseen and unheralded, spreading that irresponsible thing called *bruit;* and for minor functions there are the Shade of the Earth, Spirit Messengers, and Recording Angels.

One cannot but be struck with the astounding significance for the literature of these days of the metaphysical machinery that Hardy has invented. By this machinery we are for the first time provided with a means whereby a great work of art may be completely presentative and at the same time completely detached. Whatever may be Hardy's theory of the Novel, and he himself has defended it as a "personal impression," he has made this work completely equivocal and completely impersonal. Here we have literature divested of the pitfalls of personal predilection and prejudice. Here we have the logical presentation of poised and objective truth, presented with the fidelity of a monograph in history. And with this all the comments that could come from the various minded men of the world are formulated and catalogued. Successively we are, as we watch the great panoramic drama, the Spirit of the Years, patient and observant, the Spirit of the Pities, thrilled with the injustice of human wrongs, the Spirit Sinister, smiling with the scorn of the nihilist or the malevolent god. And no one of these things is Hardy. He stands apart, sedate—detached, a supreme creator in the dead calm of past historic events.

A striking illustration of the detached attitude it is pos-

sible to take under such a system of balanced commentary is shown in the treatment accorded to those whose lives are known to have deviated from the strict course of morality. For such as these the drama has not a word of censure. Nor is censure or praise given to any one. Interpretation of motives comes, if at all, from the lips of the person concerned, as, for instance, when Nelson half regrets "those dear Naples and Palermo days," or when Josephine repents her early flirting; or it comes frankly from the comments of the Spirit Sinister or the Spirit of the Pities, which of course are partisan and to be taken for what they are worth.

There is another thing that the metaphysical machinery of Hardy's accomplishes. It serves to give in our times, through credible though conventional means, the sense of the supernatural in human affairs. Skeptical as we are, there are limits to our knowledge and much that concerns us lies just beyond the verge in the unexplainable. A large part of our lives is spent very near the verge, peering over into the unknown. Sometimes we plumb the mystery by some finer sense, sometimes in thought we receive messages from regions lost in cloud. This element of the unexplainable, this dependence upon the mysterious forces that can never by any means be seen or felt enters into the lives of all of us, however unwilling we may be to admit it. It is this large dependence that we have in real life upon a life that as humans we cannot fathom that is lamentably lacking in most of our literature to-day. How is the literature of such an age as ours to do justice to its unseen and spiritual forces? This thing Hardy does in quite a credible way by conventionalizing the actions of the Spirits and calling upon us for a temporary cessation of disbelief. By having these Spirits move about among men and speak, all unseen, to the inner ear, the effect of the spiritual is gained without an annoying presumption of the mysterious. So the Spirit of the Pities speaks into Napoleon's ear at the Coronation in Milan and in a ball-room at Paris and he becomes thoughtful in the midst of his splendor. In this way the Spirit of Rumors enters a ball-room or the ranks of an army and spreads unaccountable whisperings. Even the Spirit of the Years warns Nelson that his hours are short, tells Brunswick before Waterloo that he must join his father who had gone before in the same cause, and to Villeneuve whispers when the hour for suicide has come.

It is clear that this is a drama as much of the unseen as of the seen and that it purports to objectify as much the hidden purposes and tendencies of the ages as the actions and motives of men. To this purpose even the scenic accessories of the drama are directed. As it is a play for mental performance on an imaginary stage, it is quite unnecessary to restrict the action to the limits of ordinary stagecraft. For this reason the largest use to which the scenic background is put is to making visible, as upon a map, the great plan of the Immanent Will as it worked itself out over Europe. The first great panorama presents the Continental scene:

> "The nether sky opens, and Europe is disclosed as a prone and emaciated figure, the Alps shaping like a backbone, and the branching mountain-chains like ribs, the peninsular plateau of Spain forming a head. Broad and lengthy lowlands stretch from the north of France across Russia like a gray-green garment hemmed by the Ural Mountains and the glistening Arctic Ocean.
>
> "The point of view then sinks downward through space, and draws near to the surface of the perturbed countries, where the peoples, distressed by events which they did not cause, are seen writhing, crawling, heaving, and vibrating in their various cities and nationalities."

At the battle of Austerlitz the Will unfolds itself as if before physical sight:

> "At once, as earlier, a preternatural clearness possesses the atmosphere of the battle-field, in which the scene becomes anatomized and the living masses of humanity transparent. The controlling Immanent Will appears therein, as a brain-like network of currents and ejections, twitching, interpenetrating, entangling, and thrusting hither and thither the human forms."

The dumb shows, too, appeal to the inner eye and are quite impossible of action save upon the stage of the mind.

This convention of mental performance secures for the drama some of its most picturesque effects and gives to it the sense of broad sweep and the supernatural that is necessary for the adequacy of its presentment. No curtain of cloth is drawn to obscure the completed action. Instead the author borrows nature's curtains, the descending night, the gathering fog and mist, and for the median effects the monotones of twilight and the silver gauzes of moonshine. Once "a moving stratum of summer cloud covers up the spectacle like an awning." Again "the characters disperse, the fire sinks, and snowflakes and darkness blot out all." A London assembly closes in this way:

droit divin et du droit populaire. Mais Mr. Hardy les a choisis surtout de façon à dresser l'Angleterre devant Napoléon, comme son adversaire le plus constant, le plus convaincu, le plus inébranlable. Cette conception, qui permet à Mr. Hardy de nous montrer divers aspects curieux de la vie

"The confused tongues of the assembly waste away into distance, till they are heard but as the ripples of the sea from a high cliff, the scene becoming small and indistinct therewith. This passes into silence, and the whole disappears."

In imagination this is the way the Cathedral at Milan is obscured after the Coronation:

"The scene changes. The exterior of the Cathedral takes the place of the interior, and the point of view recedes, the whole fabric smalling into distance and becoming like a rare, delicately carved alabaster ornament. The city itself sinks into miniature, the Alps show afar as a white corrugation, the Adriatic and the Gulf of Genoa appear on this and that hand, with Italy between them, till clouds cover the panorama."

And sometimes we are made to see a scene that can only be a figment of the fancy of the person of the play:

"Thereupon a vision passes before Napoleon as he lies, comprising hundreds of thousands of skeletons and corpses in various stages of decay. They rise from his various battle-fields, the flesh dropping from them, and gaze reproachfully at him. His intimate officers slain he recognizes among the crowd. In front is the Duke of Enghien as showman."

In this way the spectacle advances, sometimes in crowded assembly halls, sometimes in lonely Wessex, moving by night and day and through all seasons to all the capitals of Europe; now we listen to the baseless rumors of ignorant men, and again to the paraphrased debates of Parliament, the manifestoes of Napoleon, and the decrees of the Powers. The period covered by the action extends from 1805 to the defeat at Waterloo, and the play comprises in its three parts 19 acts, 130 scenes, and upward of 30 dumb shows and utilizes in the first part 80 and in the second and third parts 125 speaking characters.

The action begins with the rumors, among a group of stage-coach passengers in southwest England, that Bonaparte is expected to attempt a landing at Wessex. Then in the office of the Minister of Marine in Paris Napoleon outlines his determination to attack England. Back again we are taken to a session of the House of Commons in London, where Sheridan, Fox, Pitt, and other statesmen debate the bill for national defense. The true course of the historic argument is followed in natural and brilliant blank verse. Flashed to the harbor of Boulogne we see the French Army of Invasion in perspective; and in the next scene are in London again, attending at the House of a Lady of Quality, where the Lords are discussing the impending League of

the Powers of Europe. The act ends with the crowning of Napoleon at Milan.

The following acts take us rapidly over the succeeding scenes of the preparing conflict. At Gibraltar we see Nelson, who, having fathomed the ruse of the French navy, prepares for offense. We are shown the childishness of George, the weariness of Pitt, overburdened and alone, the panic of the English, the failure of Napoleon's plans for the invasion of the islands, and his victory over the Austrians. Now approaches the battle off Trafalgar, the first stand of the English against Napoleon, and the first act in the breaking of his power.

"A bird's-eye view of the sea discloses itself. It is daybreak, and the broad face of the ocean is fringed on its eastern edge by the Cape and the Spanish shore."

Two parallel lines of ships run north and south. They are the combined French and Spanish navies. "On the western horizon two columns of ships appear in full sail, small as moths to the aerial vision. They are bearing down toward the combined squadrons." As the battle begins the scene changes from general to particular. The view is first from the deck of the *Bucentaure,* Villeneuve's flag-ship. Then it changes to the quarter-deck of the *Victory.* Nelson is seen with his officers; Scott is shot dead; Hardy, the flag captain, is wounded. Nelson, full epauletted, walks the deck.

"Gunners, naked to the waist and reeking with sweat, are now in swift action on the several decks, and firemen carry buckets of water hither and thither. The killed and wounded thicken around."

Finally Nelson falls, shot through the left shoulder. He is carried off and then:

"A LIEUTENANT. Now quick and pick him off who did the deed?
That white-bloused man there in the mizzen-top.
POLLARD, a midshipman (shooting): No sooner said than done. A pretty aim!
The Frenchman falls dead upon the poop."

The scene changes to the *Bucentaure* and back again to the cockpit of the *Victory* where Nelson lies. There is a "din of trampling and dragging overhead"; some lie "groaning, some silently dying, some dead." The thoughts of the dying Nelson turn to other days, with one whom he leaves "safe on the nation's honor." "Does love die with our frame's decease, I wonder, or does it live on ever?" he

asks. There is no answer. Soon the Chaplain's words, "He has homed to where there's no more sea," announce the end.

From the quick rattle of dramatic blank verse, Shakespearean in intensity and pathos, we turn to the Guild Hall at London where Pitt speaks his immortal words, thus nobly paraphrased:

> "My lords and gentlemen:—You have toasted me
> As one who has saved England and her cause.
> I thank you, gentlemen, unfeignedly.
> But—no man has saved England, let me say:
> England has saved herself by her exertions:
> She will, I trust, save Europe by her example!"

Then follows quickly the battle of Austerlitz, the preparations for coalition between Francis and Napoleon, and the death of Pitt, worn out under his burdens. So ends the first part.

With the second part begins the diplomatic battle. The contest is now not only one of arms. Wits are pitted against wits. Unbeaten at arms, Napoleon moves on to Jena, routs the Prussians, enters Berlin, and enforces the cession of Magdeburg against the pleadings of the fascinating Queen Louisa. Even the victories of diplomacy seem to be on his side. Josephine pleads nobly for her wifehood:

> "Great Cæsar, you declared,
> Sank sonless to his rest; was greater deemed
> Even for the isolation. Frederick
> Saw, too, no heir. It was the fate of such,
> Often, to be denied the common hope
> As fine for fullness in the rarer gifts
> That Nature yields them.
>
> "Napoleon's offspring in his like must lie:
> The second of his line be he who shows
> Napoleon's soul in later bodiment,
> The household father happening as he may."

But the case runs against her from the first. The divorce is ratified. The negotiations with Austria begin and are pressed to successful conclusion. We are shown the meeting of Napoleon and his girl bride in the rain at Courcelles, the marriage in the grand gallery of the Louvre, and are present at the birth of the heir at the Tuileries at Paris.

Meanwhile the battle of Corunna has been fought in Spain, Sir John Moore has been hurriedly interred under the guns of the French—

> "He'll couch as calmly in this scrabbled hole
> As in a royal vault!"

and Wagram has been lost to the Austrians. Then out of the victory of the English at Talavera in Spain the figure of Wellesley begins to emerge from the shadow, the only man in the great "clash of peoples" who compares with Napoleon in embodying the purposes of the insensate Will. As a foil to the new hopes in Wellington, with which the second part ends, Hardy shows in *chiaroscuro* the mad ravings of the King at Windsor, the revels of the Prince Regent in London, and the whisperings of terror and hope spread by the Spirit of Rumor among the English people.

Part I. ended with Napoleon's supremacy. In Part II. the tides run dubiously. Part III. begins on a sure note of victory for England. The Will begins to work away from Napoleon, but still he retains his regnant imagination. The English invasion thwarted, the Russian alliance violated, he turns his mind toward an attack on India. With the advance on Moscow, fortune turns against him irretrievably. The General who could fight the legions of armed foes could not fight hunger and cold.

"The caterpillar shape still creeps laboriously nearer, but instead of increasing in size by the rules of perspective, it gets more attenuated, and there are left upon the ground behind it minute parts of itself, which are speedily flaked over, and remain as white pimples by the wayside. . . .

"Pines rise mournfully on each side of the nearing object; ravens in flocks advance with it overhead, waiting to pick out the eyes of those who fall. . . . The sky seems to join itself to the land. The marching figures drop rapidly, and almost immediately become white grave-mounds."

The Grand Army is wiped away. On the Peninsula the star of Wellington continues to rise. After Leipzig, Napoleon is without an army. The Allies are supreme. Then follows as swift as fate the Catastrophe the Will had been weaving—two hundred pages that read like an avalanche. Maria Louise is appointed Regent, but upon the advance of the Allies retires from Paris and a Bourbon is again placed on the throne of France. Napoleon is in eclipse. The people of Paris put a rope around the neck of the statue of Napoleon on the Column of the Grand Army and amuse themselves with twitching it and crying, "Strangle the tyrant!" From the swift rattle of abdication to Elba we are given two respites. One comes when Roustan, the Mameluke, true to his heredity, brings Napoleon the sword for suicide. Refusing this as untimely, Napoleon muses on death by another means:

"How gild the sunset sky of majesty
Better than by the act esteemed of yore?
Plutarchian heroes outstayed not their fame,
And what nor Brutus nor Themistocles
Nor Cato nor Mark Antony survived,
Why, why should I?"

He takes poison, but is saved.

The other is in the chamber of Josephine, where she who had been an Empress lies dying. Her thoughts are all upon her absent lord, his late distresses, and those early days when, liking Parisian coquetting best, she refused to join the victorious General in Italy.

"The independent spouse
At that time was myself; but afterward
I grew to be the captive, he the free.
Always 'tis so: the man wins finally!"

Action begins again with Napoleon's dramatic escape from Elba, his building of an army, the desertion of Maria Louisa to the Allies and the arms of her Count, and flight of Louis from Paris. We are in the famous ball-room at Brussels. The news comes that the French have passed the Sambre at Charleroi. Wellington makes call for the rendezvous There echoes through the room the "long-drawn metallic purl of sound" of the call to arms, and the Spirit of the Years sees moving among the dancers one whom none others have seen:

"He was my old friend Death, in rarest trim,
The occasion favoring his husbandry."

Like premonitory events of fate come the battle at Quartre-Bras, the skirmishes on the road to Waterloo and at Nivelle. The battle of Waterloo hangs suspended in the air and finally breaks into detonations as the armies wheel to action. There are a hundred pages of swift, hard, vigorous fighting, now viewed from afar as if from aerial vantage ground, now from the midst of the struggle. Under the lights of the different Spirits the action flashes to scorn, softens to tenderness, or becomes clarified into the picturesque. It is safe to say that our literature has no such battle scenes since Shakespeare, whose scenes these resemble. Before us flash the death of Brunswick, Picton, Ponsonby, the sacrifice of Ney to a worse than death on the battle-field—

"The finest cavalry commander, he
That wears a foreign plume."

There's time for justice to each, though the action moves like a whirlwind.

And then we are taken to scenes such as we have not had before, the horror and sordidness of war. It is in the Women's Camp near Mont Saint Jean.

"WOMAN: There's no sign of my husband any longer. His battalion is half a mile from where it was. He looked back as they wheeled off toward the fighting-line, as much as to say, 'Nancy, if I don't see 'ee again, this is good-by, my dear.' Yes, poor man! . . . Not but what 'a had a temper at times!

"SECOND WOMAN: I'm out of all that. My husband—as I used to call him for form's sake—is quiet enough. He was wownded at Quarter-Brass the day before yesterday, and died the same night. But I didn't know it till I got here, and then says I, 'Widder or no widder, I mean to see this out.'"

The unweeting doom assigned by the Will draws down upon Napoleon. The impatient waiting for Grouchy ends in the certainty that he will not come.

> "Life's curse begins, I see,
> With helplessness,"

muses Napoleon. Then, the Prussians coming up and loss made certain, he cries:

> "Now all is lost! The clocks of the world
> Strike my last empery-hour,"

and with the end, in the words of the Spirit of Rumors, Napoleon "loses his last chance of dying well."

After the battle comes quiet:

"The reds disappear from the sky, and the dusk grows deeper. The action of the battle degenerates to a hunt, and recedes farther and farther into the distance southward. . . . In the vast and dusky shambles black, slouching shapes begin to move, the plunderers of the dead and dying.

"The night grows clear and beautiful, and the moon shines musingly down. But instead of the sweet smell of green herbs and dewy rye as at her last shining upon these fields, there is now the stench of gunpowder and a muddy stew of crushed crops and gore."

In such a study as this one cannot do justice to the remarkable variety of form and effectiveness of poetic diction displayed in *The Dynasts*. Hardy's gift, as he himself suggests in the Preface to one of his volumes of verse, is dramatic rather than lyrical, yet there are three or four songs of great beauty in the work and other passages of a lyrical character that approach pure magic. One finds it necessary to mention the technical versatility displayed in the lyrics of the Intelligences and Choruses, and particularly the ex-

traordinary flexibility of the blank-verse paraphrases of actual prose addresses and public documents, such, for instance, as the Proclamation of the Powers, which Hardy gives both in verse and the original prose. The narrative and dramatic mastery of the diction, both prose and verse, has already been sufficiently indicated. Hardy has enriched English poetry with some lines that will not die; many, indeed, challenge and enjoy comparison with the best in the language. The death of Nelson, Josephine's pleading before the divorce, and Napoleon's colloquy with the Spirit of the Years at the end of the drama are pure gold. In our literature one can go no further than to say a thing is Shakespearean. In *The Dynasts* we see many traits that strengthen the association of the name of Hardy with that of Shakespeare; and yet in the entire work there isn't a line that one can say is reminiscent of Shakespeare. In respect of independence of genius, Hardy is unique in our time. The conclusion must be that here is a work of first magnitude—the first, indeed, of our day to create out of the modern cosmogony an epical structure vigorous with all the meanings of antiquity.

THOMAS H. DICKINSON.

REVUE GERMANIQUE - 1910.

J'ai réservé pour la fin le grand drame de M. Thomas Hardy, *The Dynasts* (1), qui relève bien plus de notre rubrique que de la chronique du théâtre. Ce poème dramatique en 3 volumes, « dix-neuf actes et cent trente scènes », qui compte quatre ou cinq cents personnages et des figurants par milliers, est proprement injouable ; mais il constitue, sous forme dialoguée, le plus puissant poème épique qui ait paru depuis des années. La première partie avait été publiée en 1904, la seconde en 1906 ; mais c'est seulement aujourd'hui, l'œuvre achevée, que nous pouvons juger la grandeur de l'entreprise et féliciter le grand romancier de l'avoir menée à si belle fin, malgré les railleries de ses détracteurs et les inquiétudes de ses amis. Mr. Hardy a voulu nous donner dans cette grande œuvre une vue « panoramique » de la carrière de Napoléon, ou plutôt des onze années de sa vie (1805-1815) qui ont été, au point de vue européen, les plus grosses de conséquences. On pourrait soutenir que l'événement capital de ces trois derniers siècles, ce n'est pas la Révolution française, mais bien la lutte de Bonaparte, représentant de ses principes contre l'Europe monarchique, acharnée à les écraser. Le titre même du drame semble confirmer cette interprétation, et le fait que les représentants du droit divin finissent par triompher de l'usurpateur n'est pas pour déplaire au pessimiste amer qu'est Mr. Hardy. Il a donc découpé cette période historique en tableaux significatifs, rejetant les moins frappants et leur substituant çà et là des scènes de la vie familière, qui nous montrent le retentissement pathétique sur la vie des humbles des querelles et des passions des grands. A cette préoccupation de réalisme apitoyé, nous devons plusieurs peintures savoureuses du Wessex, si cher à l'auteur, pendant les guerres continentales. Le spectateur est censé placé dans les nuages et apercevoir de cette situation privilégiée, selon qu'il se rapproche de la terre ou s'élève davantage en l'air, les événements de la vie politique ou les mouvements étendus des armées, cheminant comme des fourmis ou des chenilles à la surface de ce globe terraqué ; les nuages qui s'épaississent ou la nuit qui tombe tiennent la place du banal rideau. De ce poste élevé nous pouvons percevoir aussi les dialogues des êtres surnaturels qui jugent le drame humain, Esprit des Années, Esprit des Pitiés, Esprit ironique, etc ; leurs propos, transcrits en italiques, interrompent la scène terrestre ou la résument ; parfois, sous un déguisement mystérieux, ils se mêlent aux hommes pour influencer leurs actions. Et nous assistons ainsi à la formidable tragi-comédie qui mit l'Europe à feu et à sang pendant onze années et presque tous ses monarques, si fiers de leur antique lignage, aux pieds du petit aventurier corse. La pièce commence au camp de Boulogne pour finir à Waterloo. Tous les événements essentiels y figurent, tous ceux du moins qui intéressent ce conflit du droit divin et du droit populaire. Mais Mr. Hardy les a choisis surtout de façon à dresser l'Angleterre devant Napoléon, comme son adversaire le plus constant, le plus convaincu, le plus inébranlable. Cette conception, qui permet à Mr. Hardy de nous montrer divers aspects curieux de la vie anglaise, les misères du vieux roi George III, aveugle et fou, les sottises du Régent et ses fêtes scandaleuses, l'exaspération populaire contre Bonaparte, etc, est d'ailleurs conforme à l'histoire. Et l'ensemble de la trilogie donne l'impression d'être fondée sur une étude très consciencieuse des mémoires et autres documents relatifs à toute cette époque.

(1) *The Dynasts*, 3 vol. Macmillan, 1904-8.

Mr. W. Compton Leith est tout à l'opposé de Mr. J. K. Jerome. Autant l'un est joyeux, autant l'autre est mélancolique; celui-là déborde d'humour, celui-ci en est tout dépourvu. Tout de même il y a bien du talent dans cette *Apologia Diffidentis* (1), qui est d'ailleurs, sauf erreur, son début. La timidité, dont il prend trop bien la défense pour n'en avoir point pâti, a dû le retenir de publier jusqu'à ce jour; mais enfin, la fierté aidant, qui n'est pas incompatible avec la timidité, bien au contraire, il a su se faire violence et nous livrer sa douloureuse confession. Remercions-le de son courage auquel nous devons un très joli livre. Il n'y a point ici d'histoire à proprement parler; l'auteur parle en son nom, il nous raconte combien il a souffert de sa timidité dès l'enfance, que ni Oxford ni l'Inde où il a séjourné ensuite n'ont pu le guérir, qu'il est revenu en Angleterre, toujours muré en lui-même, incapable de dominer cette réserve ombrageuse, qu'il est resté séparé par elle de ses rêves d'amour et d'amitié, isolé de tous — sauf des enfants, — cherchant à tromper son isolement avec de nobles livres et des systèmes philosophiques, qui pourraient lui donner le sens de cette vie pour lui manquée. Cette autobiographie mélancolique serait plus émouvante si elle était écrite avec plus de simplicité et d'abandon; mais elle gagne en noblesse ce qu'elle perd en acuité. Les sentiments, les impressions de l'auteur ne sont pas toujours aussi subtils qu'on l'attendrait de sa nature; et les idées qu'il exprime ne sont pas bien originales. Cependant son livre mérite d'être lu pour la beauté de forme dont il sut les revêtir. Sa phrase, nombreuse et grave, sent un peu le travail, sinon l'effort. Mais elle a des qualités plastiques et musicales qui ne sont point si communes à notre époque trépidante, et confèrent à ce recueil de descriptions et d'analyses un cachet de distinction rare.

C'est un livre également très distingué, très original, que celui de M. R. Macaulay, *The Secret River* (2). Il étonnerait la plupart des lecteurs et le grand public ne l'appréciera point; mais les esprits délicats, qui aiment la jolie prose, y trouveront un régal exquis. C'est l'histoire navrante d'un poète trompé par une femme vulgaire, qui la reprend par pitié et qui en meurt. Mais en résumant grossièrement ce court récit, on commet la même impertinence qu'un rustaud maniant de ses doigts rêches le velours somptueux d'un beau papillon. Mr. Macaulay est encore un poète qui écrit en prose; comme son héros qui a le don de percer les apparences et d'entendre les voix des génies, il nous donne une transposition de la réalité vaporeuse et enveloppée. Les faits et gestes de ses personnages nous apparaissent à travers une brume lumineuse et dorée, que la réalité trop positive transperce rarement. On peut préférer une peinture de la vie plus solide et plus substantielle, mais Mr. Macaulay ne risque pas de faire école. Un tel livre, de qualité fine, est une exception charmante, qui s'harmonise bien à certaines heures de notre sensibilité et dont les descriptions poétiques doivent plaire à tous.

J'ai réservé pour la fin le grand drame de Mr. Thomas Hardy, *The*

(1) *Apologia Diffidentis*, 1 vol. John Lane, 1908.
(2) *The Secret River*, 1 vol. John Murray, 1909.

Maintenant, si la conception du drame est d'une belle et vaillante envergure, il y a certaines réserves à faire sur l'exécution. La psychologie des personnages n'existe pas; ils font les gestes et disent les paroles, que l'histoire rend probables, mais sans qu'on ait le temps de discerner leurs caractères. Napoléon lui-même y apparaît surtout comme le jouet inconscient de la Volonté supérieure qui compose indéfiniment le drame de la Vie. D'autre part, ce drame si dru, si rapide, est vu tellement de haut qu'il n'excite en nous qu'un intérêt purement intellectuel; les personnages nous intéressent, mais sauf quelques victimes de la politique (comme Joséphine), ou de la guerre ne nous émeuvent point. Par moments tout de même, de la grandeur des intérêts en jeu, des vies prodiguées sans compter pour atteindre le but, des sacrifices héroïquement consentis — pour quel résultat? — il se dégage une impression de grandeur épique et poignante. La bataille de Waterloo, qui remplit les deux derniers actes et qui nous est décrite sous ses diverses faces, du côté de l'Empereur et du côté de Wellington, est un résumé inoubliable : aucun récit de bataille ne donne l'impression concrète et vivante de ces dialogues successifs. Et, à un degré moindre, on en peut dire autant de tout ce morceau d'histoire, vu dans un raccourci kaléidoscopique et qui, lu d'affilée, devient profondément impressionnant. Sur la forme même il y aurait beaucoup à dire. L'auteur de *Tess* et de *Jude l'Obscur* est un admirable poète en prose et nous retrouvons sa force dense et dure dans les indications scéniques si concises et substantielles qu'il met devant chaque scène, surtout dans les puissantes esquisses de batailles qui remplacent parfois les scènes parlées. Mais le vers blanc dans lequel s'expriment la plupart des personnages est tantôt bien caillouteux, tantôt bien plat. Le défaut était peut-être inévitable; quand on veut reproduire une séance de la Chambre des Communes, un discours de Pitt ou de Castlereagh, on risque fort de tomber dans le prosaïsme. Shakespeare lui-même n'y échappe point dans le début d'*Henri V* — celui de tous les drames qui rappelle le plus celui-ci — et l'on ne saurait attendre de personnages qui sont morts d'hier les envolées, les hardiesses poétiques, que l'éloignement justifie au moyen âge. Tout de même il y a progrès dans ce sens de la première partie aux deux autres; et l'auteur aurait pu, je crois, s'en aviser plus tôt. Pour remédier à ce prosaïsme plus ou moins évitable, il a entremêlé aux propos des humains les jugements et les exaltations des esprits surnaturels. Mais ici encore les réalisations ne valent pas les intentions. La comparaison avec Shelley, que suggèrent inévitablement leurs noms, est des plus malencontreuses, car les vers de Mr. Hardy, hérissés de vocables durs, n'ont aucune souplesse, aucun rythme entraînant. Çà et là pourtant, un bout de chanson, une description rapide d'un coin de nature, un récit de bataille à vol d'oiseau, nous réconcilient avec le poète. Et dans l'ensemble, quand on considère la hardiesse de l'entreprise, la noblesse de la conception, la vigueur du style, on ne peut qu'admirer l'œuvre et remercier Mr. Hardy d'avoir persévéré. Si elle ne vaut pas peut-être ses meilleurs romans, c'était une tentative curieuse et c'est aujourd'hui un beau livre, qui fait honneur au poète et à toute la littérature anglaise.

Maurice Castelain.

English poetry with some lines that will not die; many, indeed, challenge and enjoy comparison with the best in the language. The death of Nelson, Josephine's pleading before the divorce, and Napoleon's colloquy with the Spirit of

COMPTES RENDUS CRITIQUES

The Oldest English Epic, Beowulf, Finnsburg, Waldere, Deor, Widsith, and the German **Hildebrand,** translated in the original metres with introduction and notes by FRANCIS B. GUMMERE. New-York, the Macmillan Company, 1909. pp. VIII + 203, dollar, 10 net.

Le vieux poème de *Beowulf* a été traduit en latin, en danois, en allemand (sept fois), en français, en suédois, en italien, en hollandais, — en prose plus ou moins littérale et en toute sorte de vers. Voici la douzième traduction anglaise. Comme plusieurs de ses prédécesseurs, entre autres le poète William Morris, le présent traducteur a voulu reproduire, autant que cela se peut, les caractères de la versification originale. Chaque vers consiste en deux demi-vers distincts, chacun contenant deux syllabes accentuées. La première syllabe accentuée du second demi-vers est celle qui donne la rime initiale ou allitération. Avec elle *doit* rimer *une* des deux syllabes accentuées qui précèdent et *peuvent* rimer ces *deux* syllabes. La quatrième syllabe accentuée, néanmoins, ne doit pas rimer avec la troisième, ou syllabe donnant la rime, mais peut rimer avec celle des deux autres qui se trouve ne pas rimer avec la syllabe qui donne la rime — d'où des rimes ou allitérations croisées. Le malheur, déclare M. Gummere, est que le traducteur est astreint à plus de régularité qu'il n'y en a dans l'original, qui suivait des règles de détail aujourd'hui impossibles à observer, et aussi qu'il ne peut maintenir la prépondérance du rythme descendant. Un autre inconvénient, dont ne parle pas M. G., mais qui se fait parfois sentir dans sa traduction, c'est la tyrannie de l'allitération. Elle contraint en effet parfois le traducteur à mettre de la bourre dans ses vers. En voici un exemple. Wiglaf vient secourir son seigneur. Il est un adversaire terrible pour le dragon. « This the dragon found when *they* had met », dit l'original (2630). Cette phrase si simple devient, pour cause d'allitération : « So the worm found out — when once in fight *the foes* had met », expression inutilement chargée, peu directe et d'abord, par l'introduction de « les ennemis », déroutante. C'est encore l'allitération la coupable au vers 2324 : So I bring with me — breast-plate and *board*. Ce *board* serait une énigme sans une note. Une note donc nous dit : entendez *shield* — note répétée au vers 2673. Mais une traduction doit se suffire à elle-même, tout au moins quand elle ne se heurte pas à des difficultés insurmontables, ce qui n'est pas le cas ici. Des notes, hélas ! il en faut encore pour expliquer un certain nombre de mots composés, comme *battle-droppings*, 1607, *linden-play*, 2039, *shoulder-comrade*, 1326, *head-watch*, 2909, et, de nouveau — mais ici on les pardonne plus volontiers — pour faire comprendre ces *kennings* ou périphrases, éléments évidemment insacrifiables de la vieille diction épique, selon qui la mer est *the whale-path*, 10, ou *the gannet's bath*, 1861, le navire, *the sea-wood*, 208, le soleil, *the*

The Westminster Gazette

Jan 21st 1911

"THE DYNASTS."

"The Dynasts. An Epic-Drama of the War with Napoleon, in three parts, nineteen acts, and one hundred and thirty scenes. The time covered by the action being about ten years." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan.) 7s. 6d.

Without arrogance or uncertainty, it is surely possible to congratulate posterity upon its inheritance of Mr. Hardy's "Dynasts." Here is a book, if ever there was one, concerning which we feel we can prophesy with assurance that it will survive our transitory generation. First published in three volumes, which appeared as each was completed, it is now issued in one; and its range, the breadth and boldness of its conception, its unity in complexity, its inexhaustible creativeness are the more manifest. For more than twenty years, Mr. Hardy tells us, this vast theme lay as it were in process of gestation in his mind. "On a belated day, about seven years back," it was outlined. And now here is this "panoramic show," this "Spectacle in the likeness of a Drama," a Gargantuan achievement that can claim to be a national as well as an individual triumph, secure, living, and complete.

It is no wonder that Mr. Hardy had to beat about to find terms in which to describe his work. "Epic-Drama," even, is a hardly satisfactory "cross." "The Dynasts," indeed, is at present the only representative of a new species in literature. And not only is it a species singularly original and unforeseen, but so integral and organic is this new birth that for the moment there seems no probability of improving upon the model, no promise of evolution. This at least may be said: many years of what, so far as art is concerned, can only be a short life will have to be devoted to the accomplishment of any work that attempts to follow Mr. Hardy's astonishing example. Many years, too, of the life of how rare a genius, how masterly a mind, of how entranced and curious a student of history, character, consciousness, and life.

Of these four absorbing studies, that of consciousness, perhaps, has been the means of supplying what is the most unusual quality in "The Dynasts." The psychological novel that with the meticulousness of a chemist's balance weighs individual motive, and with the subtlest touches of an etcher frets in the lights and shades of individual character, is now no new thing in fiction. Every dramatist, too, in his presentation of action is compelled to concern himself with that inward conflict of the will, that inward impulse of the instincts and of heredity from which action proceeds. In fiction character is presented either from the point of view of the author, with a running explication or commentary, as with Meredith; or from the point of view of one or more of the characters themselves, as with Mr. Henry James. In drama the characters must present themselves in speech and action, without intrusion of the dramatist, straight to the spectator's intelligence. "The Dynasts" stands midway between these two forms of art, and is the outcome of a fusion of both methods. Not only does it enormously transcend the ordinary novel in scope and conception, but, while keeping true to the actual facts it sets out to present, it bathes those facts and the innumerable characters and wills, influences and motives that brought them about, in an atmosphere of pure imagination, an imagination with the powers of a creative, all-seeing spectator to whom the whole complex drama is but a succession of mental phenomena. The reader's consciousness is Mr. Hardy's stage. He translates, as it were, the macrocosm without—that world of a Great Historical Calamity, or Clash of Peoples—into terms of the quiet brooding world within. Beneath the thraldom of a magician's wand we are at the same time the master and the sport of his puppet-show, of which Europe, spread out in fancy from London to Moscow, is the narrow, changeful scene. Just as in actual life the imagination wanders like Ariel, now soaring until the sea is but a darkish wash of colour round continents like the fretted fragments of a child's puzzle, now hovering in extraordinary closeness over Stephano and Trinculo hob-nobbing with Caliban; so we wend our way through "The Dynasts," incessantly conscious of man's mortal, corporeal insignificance, yet conscious, too, of the illusion of space and time and of things material, incessantly conscious of our own immortal gravity and calm, and of the inward voices.

For what are Mr. Hardy's "Phantom Intelligences" but inward voices—the spies, the witnesses, the spectral companions of the life within? Do we not every day hear the lamentable Pities chaunting from afar as we scan our morning paper's tragic crop? Who has not tapped at times, willy-nilly, that subconscious butt of racial and hereditary experience from which emanates the thin trickle which we call the wisdom of "the Ancient Spirit of the Years"? Who has not listened with horror-struck surmise to the voice of Rumour, and vainly endeavoured to cast off the brooding presence of the Spirits Sinister, who haunt every approach of the mind with their foul cynicism? Is not even the Immanent Will that momentary sense which sometimes visits us of a kind of potential omniscience and omnipotence in ourselves? With such complete mastery Mr. Hardy martials these scenes of battle and famine, of Brighton gala-night and Commons' sitting, of Wessex Downs and Moscow snows and the bogs of Walcheren, with such subtlety of management he shows his characters, great and little, as "acting while discovering their intention to act," that, whatever our wonder and delight or horror and revulsion may be in surveying the vast spectacle, we are very rarely stirred out of the trance in which he binds us. Under his spell, indeed, we hardly realise the stupendous difficulties of the achievement. We are in thrall to a dream—and to a dream that comes at times very near to crossing the border-line of nightmare.

But in all this we are only attempting to express what Mr. Hardy himself makes clear in his preface—using, too, much the same terms. "Readers will readily discern," he writes, "that 'The Dynasts' is intended simply for mental performance and not for the stage":

(But) in respect of such plays of possy and dream a practicable compromise may conceivably result, taking the shape of a monotonic delivery of speeches, with dreamy conventional gestures, something in the manner traditionally maintained by the old Christmas mummers, the curiously hypnotising impressiveness of whose automatic style—that of persons who spoke by no will of their own—may be remembered by all who ever experienced it.

"Curiously hypnotising impressiveness"—that phrase exactly sums up the extraordinary quality in "The Dynasts" which we have been trying to describe. But there is no need to wait for that genius of stage-craft towards whom Mr. Hardy in this passage seems to be wistfully peering. Open the covers of this book, and instantly the intense and intimate commerce begins. Stealthily and hitchlessly the scenes clear, brighten, fade, and close; out of the "unapparent" voices speak. "Life is a show, and now we know it," but when the last page is turned how extraordinarily significant have become those persons "who speak by no will of their own," how strangely fateful their conventional gestures, and how curiously quiet a sense of responsibility has edged into our minds. Where, if not within, we are tempted to ask ourselves, is the sole reality of life; and what is this world but a chequered ball in whose hieroglyphics we may read on close scrutiny something of the destiny which has made us children its momentary possessor in the garden of eternity?

But this lapse into the vague and metaphysical occurs only after one's reading of "The Dynasts" is done. Otherwise—if any such trend, that is, grew too obvious or insistent during the reading—the author would not be the supreme artist he is. Simply as a piece of literature this Epic Drama is inexhaustibly fascinating. Any attempt to criticise in detail must be left to the writers of such books as will almost inevitably come to be written around it and its various aspects. One or two things, however, insist on notice in even the most casual survey—Mr. Hardy's power of imaginative visualisation and his peculiar gift of words. We say visualisation, but it is something more than this. Only a sixth sense could so transport us where it will. Never before have "stage directions" been the masterpieces of narrative they have become in his hands. The whole world of "The Dynasts" is haunted. Throughout it we are in much the same condition of suspense of mind as that which follows on the "knocking" in "Macbeth." Shakespeare's porter must, indeed, be one of Mr. Hardy's favourite characters. But never is this hauntedness more apparent than when occasionally a countryside, a room, empties itself of man:

The wind continues to prevail as the spot is left desolate, the darkness increases, rain descends more heavily, and the scene is blotted out . . .

The two multitudes lie down to sleep, and all is quiet but for the spluttering of the green wood fires, which, now that the human tongues are still, seem to hold a conversation of their own.

As for Mr. Hardy's words, they are wraiths of reality, a kind of phantom presentment of things themselves in all their most peculiar significance; but things, let it be said, always and ever in relation to humanity—in all its guises and complexities the true protagonist of this drama:

Mock on, Shade, if thou wilt! But others find
Poesy ever lurk where pit-pats poor mankind!

Revue Germanique (1911)

C'est le réalisme au contraire et le désenchantement de l'âge mûr qui prédominent dans le dernier livre de **M. Thomas Hardy** : *The Dynasts* (1). L'œuvre ici est plus considérable encore. Elle se présente sous la forme d'un « drame épique » en trois parties, dix-neuf actes et cent trente tableaux, et est consacrée à la lutte formidable entre l'Angleterre et Napoléon Ier et à sa répercussion à travers l'Europe entière. Elle fait songer aux drames historiques de Shakespeare, avec ses changements de scène continuels et ses dialogues tantôt en prose, tantôt en vers blancs. Elle s'en distingue cependant par son action autrement éparpillée, sans unité réelle même, la forme dramatique n'ayant été adoptée qu'à cause de la liberté plus grande qu'elle procurait à l'écrivain, et de la vivacité qu'elle lui permettait d'introduire dans son œuvre, le drame, comme M. Hardy le déclare dans sa préface, étant destiné non à être représenté sur la scène, mais à être « joué mentalement ».

Les Dynastes sont, avant tout, une œuvre philosophique, et qui contient les idées définitives du grand romancier. L'atmosphère qui y règne est foncièrement pessimiste. M. Hardy entraine le spectateur dans une région supraterrestre, et le met en contact avec des esprits surnaturels, témoins et juges du drame humain, l'Ancien Esprit des Années, l'Esprit des Pitiés, l'Esprit ironique, l'Esprit des Rumeurs étant les principaux. Ce sont ces esprits qui développent les doctrines pessimistes de l'auteur de *Tess* et de *Jude l'obscur*, que l'on connaît, et qui s'expriment ici avec une intransigeante rigueur. L'univers entier, l'homme aussi bien

(turn over)

(1) London, Macmillan, 1910. 7 s. 6 d.

...e e riassumono lucidamente il con-
...e lo scrittore inglese ha della vita u-
...ch'egli raffigura come una disperata
...gli esseri nella stretta di un impene-
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dei suoi studi rurali, *Under the greenwood Tree*, e due anni dopo il primo dei suoi capolavori *Far from the madding Crowd*. Il successo lo risolse a dare un addio

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The Pioneer

TIME'S LAUGH

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que la nature, est mû par la Volonté Immanente, inconsciente et aveugle :

... like a knitter drowsed,
Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness,
The will has woven with an absent heed
Since life first was ; and ever will so weave.

Nous ne sommes que des marionnettes aux mains de cette Cause première toute puissante, incapables de rien changer à notre destin, tels de simples grains de poussière qui dansent dans un rayon de soleil.

A côté de ces discussions entre les « Intelligences surhumaines » apparaît le vaste drame napoléonien, et M. Hardy reprend ici toutes ses qualités d'artiste. On y retrouve son réalisme précis et vigoureux, et sa puissance dramatique qui fait vivre avec tant d'intensité les personnages innombrables qu'il nous présente. Les premières scènes du drame semblent bien un peu lentes et monotones, mais à mesure qu'on pénètre plus avant dans l'action, elles s'animent d'une vie réelle, grouillante, et les plus grandes personnalités, les *Dynastes*, étant entourées d'une foule nombreuse de paysans, de marins, de soldats, de traînards, de déserteurs, dont l'ensemble produit sur le « spectateur mental » une impression inoubliable. Il n'est pas jusqu'aux indications scéniques, très nombreuses, qui ne soient des descriptions magnifiques, supérieures parfois aux plus belles pages des romans du Wessex, et qui n'achèvent ainsi de faire de l' « épopée-dramatique » de M. Hardy une production sans égale dans la littérature anglaise moderne, et, en particulier, comme le glorieux couronnement de toute son œuvre.

s'éteint comme un feu d'artifice et que l'E
rentre dans l'obscurité, les Pitiés se dema
pourquoi la Force irresponsable se plaît
jeux absurdes et vains et se disent qu'
sera pas toujours ainsi. S'adressant « à
que la nature proclame et qui précipite l
mes de leur trône » : « Nous croyons, cha
dans un hymne final, que ton inso
mmensité légitime notre espoir suprême
la conscience au doux regard se tient près du
métier où se tisse la vie pour, peu à peu, venir
lancer. » Il est intéressant de noter cet
ssez nouveau chez M. Hardy
pour donner tout son sens où

gros garçon embar
ses fredaines, fuy
dans les bras de l
aussi ; des paysans
gie « Boney » retour de

Thomas Hardy, by Harold Child. Writers of the Day Series. New York: Henry Holt & Co. 50 cents.
[from a brilliant Amer. paper "The New Republic"]

STUPIDITY about Thomas Hardy's pessimism disfigured G. K. Chesterton's brilliant handbook on "The Victorian Age in Literature." There is no such blemish of stupidity in this comprehending essay by Harold Child. "The Dynasts" he considers Hardy's greatest work. "Even more than the finest among the tragic novels, the tragic poem is full of a great pity and a great patience. It cannot comfort; but it does better. Like all great tragedy, it is 'kathartic,' purging those who learn to love it of meanness and impatience and self-pity. Like all great art, it exalts and enlarges. Perhaps, in the end, that is the word for Hardy's work." This may sound acquiescent, and in so far as authority is necessary to the purest critical delight Mr. Child does not have it in imposing degree, but he is sincere and sympathetic, and he pays the greatest possibile tribute to genius, the tribute of having read him, of inducing other people to read him. The impression that is forced into these 20,000 words is amazingly strong and varied. It is practically impossible to receive it without turning to the Titan that inspired it, a creator of such deep foundation, power and heartrending perception that his place is among the very great.

The Academy Dec. 24th 1910

REVIEWS

THE PRESIDENT OF THE IMMORTALS

The Dynasts. By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan and Co. 7s. 6d.)

The publication of Mr. Thomas Hardy's epic poem, "The Dynasts," in a complete and handy edition, is something of a literary event, and gives a suitable opportunity for a brief consideration of the work as a whole. When, in the year 1903, the first part of this monumental achievement was issued, it was realised that Mr. Hardy had made a definite and irrefutable claim for a position other than that of novelist—the rank of a powerful and dramatic poet was universally acceded to him. In this sumptuous and impressive epic, built from start to finish like some strong, fine, famous architectural triumph, embellished here and there with hazardous ornamentation and daring departures from the normal methods which only a consummate craftsman could venture to use, the quality that belongs to many of the author's shorter poems exhibits itself in a more affluent degree; a quality, we might term it, of intrepidity, of pluck, which in lesser men would run the risk of becoming temerity. He scruples not to address his powers to the depiction of the most exalted scenes, leaving the plane of earth entirely, on occasion, for that of the immortals. This in itself is, of course, neither original nor uncommon, but the intense ironic manner lends to Mr. Hardy's work a sting, a fearful and relentless potency, that renders it unique, and sets his stubborn defiance of accepted beliefs on a pedestal which necessitates a new adjustment of our standards of judgment. It brings that peculiar feeling,

(next page)

half admiration, half resentment, which comes when in reading some of his short poems we find the Deity addressed conversationally as "You," reasoned with, and it may be even reproached.

In "The Dynasts," we may remind our readers, Mr. Hardy precipitates into personality various vague and impersonal attributes and influences, such as the Spirit of the Years, the Shade of the Earth, the Spirit of the Pities, the Spirits Ironic and Sinister, and produces them at intervals as a Greek chorus to make interpolated comments upon the national events which pass on, as a series of immense pictures, beneath their aloof but interested gaze. The action, having its definite historical basis in the Napoléonic wars, takes place in the early part of the nineteenth century; numerous deathless names are introduced — Napoléon, Josephine, Marie Louise, Nelson, King George III., Pitt, Fox, and far too many others to mention here, besides a host of more ordinary but useful persons by whose remarks the humanity of the whole thing is preserved and brought close to the reader. The scenes vary tremendously, and merely to indicate them explains sufficiently that the author intended this masterpiece of dramatic panorama (which really seems its only suitable designation, in spite of the apparent contradiction in terms) not as an entity for stage performance, but as a progression of vivid mental pictures by which the trained reader might visualise his scheme. In the first portion, for example, the characters assemble in places so various as Paris, London, a Ridge in Wessex, Boulogne, the quarter-deck of the "Victory," the Field of Austerlitz, and—curious contrast!—Putney; even thus the list is incomplete. It is scarcely necessary to remark that the machinery of such a composition would in the hands of most writers become refractory and perhaps utterly unmanageable; but, as a matter of fact, the "stage directions" which are interspersed only raise in the mind an unqualified admiration, impossible though they may be in any real sense.

The dialogue, carried on in blank-verse and in prose, makes no attempt to keep on that high and strenuous level of unnatural speech which so often characterises the modern epic, and which, as a rule, completely inhibits any impression of actuality in the reader's brain. It is, indeed, so free in places that one cannot avoid a smile at its disregard of convention, as when Lord Wellington says to Richmond:—

> Now I must also go,
> And snatch a little snooze ere harnessing.

As in the immortal novels of Wessex, the author's inimitable rustics come into the pattern of the play, and were no name attached to it they would betray him at once. In Act II., scene 5, two old men come on duty with pikes, as the beacon-keepers (the reader will remember "The Trumpet-Major," and will be aware that the germ of "The Dynasts" occurs in that book), and converse quite in the manner of the old cronies in "Far from the Madding Crowd" or "Under the Greenwood Tree":—

> First Old Man: Dids't ever larn geography?
>
> Second Old Man: No. Nor no other corrupt practices.
>
> First Old Man: Tcht-tcht! Well, I'll have patience, and put it to him in another form. Dost know the world is round—eh? I warrant dostn't!
>
> Second Old Man: I warrant I do!
>
> First Old Man: How d'ye make that out, when th'st never been to school?
>
> Second Old Man: I larned it at church, thank God.
>
> First Old Man: Church? What have God Almighty got to do with profane knowledge? Beware what you be saying, Jems Purchess!
>
> Second Old Man: I say I did, whether or no. 'Twas the zingers up in gallery that I had it from. They busted out that strong with "the round world and they that dwell therein" that we common folks down under could do no less than believe 'em.

A countrywoman and a soldier arrive on the scene and chat with the two watchers; but presently a light becomes visible in the west. It is the alarm, and the instructions immediately ensuing remind us irresistibly of the word-pictures of Egdon Heath in "The Return of the Native":

> The old men hasten to the hut, and are heard striking a flint and steel. Returning with a lit lantern they ignite a wisp of furze, and with this set the first stack of fuel in a blaze. The private of the Locals and his wife hastily retreat by the light of the flaming beacon, under which the purple rotundities of the heath show like bronze, and the pits like the eye-sockets of a skull.

The charming song of "Budmouth Dears," which was widely quoted in the reviews which appeared at the time of the first publication of "The Dynasts," will be familiar to most students of Mr. Hardy; but we do not remember that attention has ever been called to a fine specimen of a rondeau in Part III., Act I., scene 2, with the refrain "The skies fling flame"—an excellent thing, spoken by the "Chorus of Pities."

It will perhaps be profitable to leave now the details of this wonderful conception, since any attempt at an exhaustive consideration of it would occupy a whole issue of our paper, and to endeavour to discover Mr. Hardy's object in spending so much time and labour on such a work, which by its very nature can make no popular appeal; his object, that is, apart from the obvious and inviolable pleasure of the artist in his theme.

It is fairly clear that the reason stated in his preface does not contain the complete explanation of the impulses which animated him. "The Spectacle here presented in the likeness of a Drama is concerned with the Great Historical Calamity, or Clash of Peoples, artificially brought about some hundred years ago. . . The slight regard paid to English influence and action throughout the struggle by those Continental writers who had dealt imaginatively with Napoléon's career seemed always to leave room for a new handling of the theme which should re-embody the features of this influence in their true proportion; and accordingly, on a belated day about six years back,* the following drama was outlined, to be taken up now and then at wide intervals ever since." But to emphasise the English share in the great doings of those memorable years did not call imperatively for the interference of philosophising Spirits; that purpose could have been accomplished in the ordinary and accepted way, by means of human characters only, perfectly well. It is difficult to avoid the theory that Mr. Hardy's eager and insatiably questing intellect ever seeks an opportunity for setting forth what stands in the place of the Divine to him; the Over-World, the "First or Fundamental Energy," its detachment from and yet its interest in human things, and the helplessness of the mortal individual; all in his own peculiar and grim way. "What of the Immanent Will and Its Designs?" rings out a voice in the very opening line of the drama; and a little later on, the Spirit of the Years makes answer to the Spirit of the Pities:—

> In the Foretime, even to the germ of Being,
> Nothing appears of shape to indicate
> That cognizance has marshalled things terrene,
> Or will (such is my thinking) in my span.
> Rather they show that, like a knitter drowsed,
> Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness,
> The Will has woven with an absent heed
> Since life first was; and ever will so weave.

With the strange lucidity of a dream, Mr. Hardy makes visible the two worlds at once—the human peoples, "dis-

* This Preface is dated September, 1903.

(Turn over)

tressed by events which they did not cause, writhing, crawling, heaving, and vibrating in their various cities and nationalities" (does not this remind us vividly of that wonderful chapter viii. in Book I. of "Sartor Resartus"?)—and the Immortals, calmly watching, deliberating, discussing, pitying, sneering, from their disaffected altitudes. We are forced to recollect that grim sentence from the author's masterpiece of fiction:—"The President of the Immortals had finished his sport with Tess." The scope of the whole thing is simply tremendous; the effect is profoundly moving, spectacular, magnificent. The scenes seem to rise and fall, to change spectrally and silently; it is as though in some huge, enchanted hall of space, some terrible viewpoint swung between Earth and the stars, the reader were held in thrall, watching almost painfully against his will the interweaving of awful destinies, the unsentient play of extra-mundane forces. It is all a little sombre, sad, and hopeless, in spite of the closing chorus:—

> But—a stirring thrills the air
> Like to sounds of joyance there
> That the rages
> Of the ages
> Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
> Consciousness the Will informing, till it fashion all things fair.

The woeful spirit of Ecclesiastes is over it all, and we feel that in this fine and indomitable poem, perhaps Mr. Hardy's best work for pure literature, he exposes himself afresh to that charge of being a pessimist which is sometimes too hastily brought against him. "Has all this been worth while?" the Spirit Ironic asks of Napoleon. Sings the Semichorus of the Years:—

> O Immanence, That reasonest not
> In putting forth all things begot,
> Thou build'st Thy house in space—for what?
>
> O Loveless, Hateless!—past the sense
> Of kindly eyed benevolence,
> To what tune danceth this Immense?

However the reader regards "The Dynasts," he cannot, we think, evade this impression, that the "Phantasmal Intelligences" and their comments are in reality extraneous to the play, albeit a beautiful part of it as constructed, and a part which, of course, no sane person would wish expelled; and, thinking this, he will probably with little trouble be able to arrive at a reasonable statement of Mr. Hardy's idea of the cosmos and its ultimate fate. If this be not so, and we have misunderstood Mr. Hardy, we must plead that the line of reasoning seems justifiable and almost inevitable. Such analyses, however, cannot alter in the slightest degree the extraordinary pleasure, the thrill of delight, which comes from being under the spell of a master-artist.

WILFRID L. RANDELL.

A PROMISED SEQUEL

The Doctor's Christmas Eve. By JAMES LANE ALLEN. (Macmillan and Co. 6s.)

IT would perhaps be too much to say that Mr. James Lane Allen has never written a single sentence with which we could find fault, but on casting our minds back over the list of delicate human fantasies which have come from him and which have enriched in splendid measure the world of literature, we cannot remember one flaw in good taste,

TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7, 1915.

Some of the best lines in Mr. Hardy's "Dynasts" are those wherein he sings of the flowers and butterflies of the field of Waterloo, how they are stamped into blood and mud and destroyed unnoticed in the great human struggle. How many beautiful flowers and winged fancies perish in the hour of brutal and coarse conflict! Not only the flowers, and winged beauties of the field, but the more delicate things all the world over. The playing of the lute and the guitar give way to the drum and the cymbal as in turn these give way to violin and organ. The sweet lyrics of peace give way to battle marches and satires, and these give way in turn to odes of victory and hymns to the dead.

1815-1915.

We have this year to make New Year's resolutions of an extraordinary kind. As we do so our thoughts can hardly fail to be carried back to 1815, one of the great years of our national destiny. The epical events of the era 1805-1815 appeal to us with an added significance in 1915, when analogies are so frequent to events that happened a century ago. May we hope to see concentrated into one *annus mirabilis* some of the marvels of that age of "The Dynasts"!

Vol. XXXVIII.] THEISTIC SERMONS. [No. 13.

The Common Cause.

A SERMON

(Fourth of a Series on Self-consecration to God)

BY

Rev. WALTER WALSH, D.D.

PREACHED AT THE THEISTIC CHURCH, LONDON, MARCH 28, 1915.

FIRST LESSON: The Spirit of the Pities (Thomas Hardy, "The Dynasts").

In his mighty epic-drama, "The Dynasts," Thomas Hardy has introduced some phantom intelligences, the most appealing of which is one which he calls "The Spirit of the Pities." It was the closing passages which gave us our impressive first lesson this morning. Over against the Spirit ironic, the Spirit sinister, and others, he sets the Spirit of the Pities, who mournfully make comment on the passing tragedy of human existence, and to whom is given the last word in the drama. It is a beautiful conception, which, of itself, makes Hardy's great epic the worthy companion of many hours of solitary meditation.

In this vale of tears, no spirit so well becomes the sons of men as the Spirit of the Pities. Under its inspiration the strong devote themselves to the cause of the weak, the rich to the poor, the learned to the ignorant, the saintly to the sinful. That is, in scientific phrase, the law of social evolution, as esità as the command of religion. It is only so that the en mic. family of man comes to perfection.

Milano —

Corriere della Sera, 23 Febbraio 1914

Il Leopardi inglese

Londra, febbraio.

Riprendere moglie a settantaquattro anni richiede una bella e ammirevole fiducia in sè stesso e nella vita. E sposare una signorina che potrebbe, per l'età, essere la propria nipote è una stupenda prova di ottimismo. Ma l'impresa assume un eroico significato quando l'avventuroso sposo si è laboriosamente meritato la reputazione del più incorreggibile pessimista di tutta una letteratura.

Tommaso Hardy, romanziere e poeta, è considerato per comune consenso dei critici il più grande letterato inglese vivente. Può darsi che la notizia capiti come una sorpresa a molti che ne leggono il nome per la prima volta ed hanno invece familiarità colle opere di altri scrittori d'Inghilterra. All'estero si usa considerare Rudyard Kipling come il più significativo autore britannico. Qui al contrario si ostenta una certa aria di stupore alla pretesa dei critici stranieri di insediare il Kipling sul più eccelso pinnacolo letterario: e da molti fu scarsamente gustato che gli venisse assegnato il premio Nobel per la letteratura, a preferenza di Giorgio Meredith, dello Swimburne e di Tommaso Hardy. « Egli è il primo inglese incoronato nella corte dell'Europa letteraria: — esclamò un critico di mal umore — così gli orafi sono ignorati ed il fabbro viene esaltato. » Da quel giorno — non sono passati che sette anni e sembra un'epoca tanto remota — due degli orafi sono morti; ma la fama del superstite Hardy si è sempre più assodata.

La sua opera ha un'impronta così esclusivamente inglese nel paesaggio e nei personaggi (è il cantore della terra e l'epico dei campagnuoli) che non è difficile intendere perchè la sua popolarità sia scarsa oltre i confini. Ma in realtà la sua filosofia fa di lui un solitario anche nella sua stessa patria: perchè in questa terra dell'ottimismo operoso Tommaso Hardy squilla una nota così disperatamente tragica e leva una voce tanto sconsolata che la sua arte può considerarsi un prodotto d'eccezione.

E' il Leopardi inglese. Un Leopardi che scriva rade poesie e non sempre mirabili di forma, ma che meglio s'esprima nel romanzo. Però nella sua opera reca la stessa visione disperata d'un mondo senza finalità del poeta italiano: la stessa tragica concezione dell'inutilità dell'esistenza. Anche nel suo maggiore e più significativo poema *The Dynasts*, il gigantesco « dramma epico » sulla tempesta Napoleonica, la parentela spirituale con Leopardi è chiarissima: da far quasi pensare in certi punti a rifacimenti di brani del nostro poeta.

Ricordate l'angosciosa ignoranza del recanatese?

Poi di tanto adoprar, di tanti moti
d'ogni celeste, ogni terrena cosa,
girando senza posa,
per tornar sempre là donde son mosse;
uso alcuno, alcun frutto
indovinar non so.

La stessa interrogazione si muove l'Hardy. « *O Immanence, that reasonest not. — In putting forth all things begot, — Thou build'st thy house in space — for what?* » Per che cosa? E l'angosciosa domanda è in ognuno dei suoi romanzi.

Quei racconti tragici rivelano chiarissimi sostanziali elementi leopardiani a cominciare dalla concezione dei personaggi, considerati costantemente come creature nate « a soffrire di molto prima che il calare del sipario sulla loro inutile vita venga a significare che per loro tutto è rientrato nell'ordine ». (Leopardi disse similmente: « Lieta no, ma sicura — Dell'altrui dolor. ») E *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* è forse il capolavoro di Tommaso Hardy. Conclude: « Giustizia era fatta e il Presidente degli Immortali (secondo la frase di Platea) aveva finito di trastullarsi con Tess ». Queste due citazioni sono caratteristiche e riassumono lucidamente il concetto che lo scrittore inglese ha della vita umana: ch'egli raffigura come una disperata lotta degli esseri nella stretta di un impenetrabile Fato, freddo e spietato, incurante della giustizia, della virtù e del vizio, e che rallenta la sua implacabile mossa solo quando precipita le povere creature stremate nell'oscuro regno del silenzio.

Leopardiana è anche la « messa in scena » dei romanzi dell'Hardy. Le sue figure non occupano tutto il quadro: ma sono campate contro uno sfondo gigantesco di paesaggio. Vien fatto di ripensare al pastore che medita nelle solitudini dell'immenso piano e ai colloqui di Giacomo fanciullo colle vaghe stelle dell'Orsa nelle sue passate « mirando il cielo, ed ascoltando il canto della rana rimota alla campagna ». La ricetta (se posso dir così) dell'Hardy è quella di proiettare una appassionata straziante vicenda umana contro la semplicità impassibile della terra. La grandiosità della scena agisce possentemente sul lettore: anche quando l'ardore dei personaggi è più acceso e la loro esaltazione assurge all'epica, il taglio del quadro ci riconduce a un senso più preciso della proporzione. Le piccole figure che vediamo agitarsi, delineate contro l'immensità degli sfondi, sotto i vasti cieli, ci appaiono premute da un'ineluttabile imparità. Sembrano sommergersi nell'ombra del destino irreparabile. Si diffonde il presagio della tragedia: si distende sugli animi concitati l'angosciosa ansia dell'inutilità d'ogni sforzo di rivolta. E la natura assume così nell'opera del grande romanziere inglese la funzione d'un personaggio essenziale. La sua personalità è dominatrice nel dramma. L'azione apparisce umana soltanto parzialmente: e attinge un carattere cosmico.

E cosmico è il pessimismo dell'Hardy, come fu quello di Leopardi. La terra, sterminata, impassibile, misteriosa è l'instabile sostegno sul quale l'umanità si aggruppa e clamoreggia fra due silenzi e due abissi. E' un melanconico destino: e la breve vita degli uomini è avvelenata e intessuta di ambiziose aspirazioni e forzate rinunzie. Si passa in una incorreggibile aspettazione di qualcosa che non vale la spesa di aspettare, come quella festa che Leopardi ci insegnava essere una delusione delle speranze della vigilia. I contadini di Tommaso Hardy non sono felici più che gli abitanti del piccolo borgo cantato dal recanatese nel suo Sabato del villaggio.

I « romanzi del Wessex » costituiscono la più vasta e stupenda rivelazione di psicologia regionale che conti la letteratura d'ogni paese. Trascurando alcuni minori racconti, sono sette romanzi di grande lena che durante venticinque anni Tommaso Hardy ha scritto sulla campagna che abita (Wessex è il nome storico della regione che viene ora chiamata Dorset e Wietshire) e che non sono soltanto legati dalla identità dei luoghi ma da una più sorprendente unità di ispirazione. Tutta la sua opera di romanziere si è concentrata, senza deviazioni nè distrazioni, a illustrare la gente dei campi d'una regione che ha in un certo modo acquistato in Inghilterra la celebrità riconosciuta ad un'altra provincia letteraria del mondo: l'Arcadia. E l'accoppiamento è bizzarro: perchè non c'è nulla di più lontano e opposto al paese immaginario dei finti pastori di quanto sia la terra ben reale abitata dalla così schietta popolazione che formicola nei romanzi dell'Hardy.

Soltanto l'opera di Grazia Deledda può essere raffrontata a quella dell'Hardy per la costanza colla quale entrambi gli scrittori hanno attinto ispirazione alla terra natale: ma la Deledda ha almeno fatto il tentativo di espatriare, mentre l'Hardy rifiuta di abbandonare il suo canto di terra anche per un solo romanzo. Egli non saprebbe neppur consentire a vivere lontano dal suo Dorset. Soltanto per una dozzina d'anni egli s'acconciò a vivere a Londra, quando non aveva ancora principiato a scrivere. Perchè egli, prima che alla letteratura, s'era dedicato all'architettura e particolarmente a quella ecclesiastica: e la disciplina austera ha forse contribuito a insegnargli la meravigliosa arte colla quale l'Hardy « costruisce » i suoi romanzi, che lo ha fatto paragonare dai suoi critici più entusiastici a Flaubert e a Tourgheniew. A trent'anni egli volse seriamente la sua attenzione al romanzo: a trentadue pubblicò il primo dei suoi studi rurali, *Under the greenwood Tree*, e due anni dopo il primo dei suoi capolavori *Far from the madding Crowd*. Il successo lo risolse a dare un addio definitivo ai compassi e all'architettura e a Londra. Si ritirò nel Dorset, vicino a Dorchester, nei luoghi dov'era nato e aveva passato la sua giovinezza: in quella campagna che amava profondamente e della quale sente profondamente la poesia.

Quella sua fedeltà ai campi ed ai loro abitatori forse è anche dovuta alla precisa nozione che l'Hardy ha delle risorse della propria arte. Questo grande interprete delle nature semplici e forze appare subito a disagio quando nei suoi romanzi introduce delle figure di una umanità più raffinata e colta. Non sono mai queste le figure che s'imprimono nella mente del lettore colla forza irresistibile dei suoi rustici. Soltanto quando ci presenta i villici e narra delle loro passioni e delle loro tragedie egli riacquista il magistero della sua arte. Vi è una stupenda probità letteraria nella rinunzia che l'Hardy ha fatto ad ogni pretesa di romanziere dall'arte universale per limitarsi ad essere il poeta di una sola, umile classe. Ed è certo che il materiale attorno al quale l'Hardy ha circoscritto la propria osservazione ha stranamente influenzato la sua filosofia della vita. Quasi tutti i grandi scrittori della vita dei campi sono dei melanconici pessimisti. La georgica grazia, l'idilliaca visione della terra in fiore che noi, abitatori delle metropoli, ingenuamente leghiamo all'idea della campagna può, forse, aver balenato nelle prime pagine degli scrittori che hanno fatto della vita dei campi la ragione della loro arte: ma ne è presto scomparsa. E vi subentra un senso di disperata tristezza leopardiana. I primi romanzi di Tommaso Hardy avevano qualche gioconda voce, e un po' di bucolica serenità che si è come isterilita man mano ch'egli aggiungeva un nuovo libro alla collana sulla sua terra: e gli ultimi romanzi della serie, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* e *Jude the Obscure* sono tragedie senza sorrisi. I più possenti e significativi della sua produzione: ma anche i più disperati. Un personaggio della « Gente dei Boschi » sente, non senza angoscia, la formidabile energia di assimilazione della terra sull'uomo che la lavora: « Soltanto noi che viviamo qui isolati non ci accorgiamo come un'impalpabile polvere bruna si levi continuamente su dalla terra e si stratifichi su di noi ». E non solo infosca panni ed epidermide; ma anche lo spirito.

Non c'è da stupire se dopo settantaquattro anni di vita spesi quasi continuamente in questa comunione colla terra sull'anima di Tommaso Hardy c'è un sedimento d'amarezze e la sua visione del mondo s'è fatta così cupa.

E anche le donne dei suoi romanzi si sono infoscate. In generale le creature femminili ch'egli ha descritto sono tutte inquietanti. Ad esse egli affida quasi sempre la funzione di agenti del destino nella vita propria e degli altri personaggi: la causa della tragedia che poi le travolgerà nella catastrofe generale. Ma nell'ultimo volume della serie dei romanzi del Wessex — il più intinto d'amarezza — v'è una figura femminile che sorpassa tutte le altre descritte dall'Hardy, come flagello: Arabella non è più soltanto un'inconscia causa di male, non si limita ad essere lo strumento nolente della fatalità — diviene un'attiva energia malefica nella vita dell'uomo che ama.

Il Leopardi inglese però sembra recare nella propria vita una qualche maggiore gaiezza che non lasci supporre la filosofia dei suoi romanzi. E la concezione ch'egli ha della donna non gli ha impedito di vivere lietamente sposato per quasi quarant'anni: tutta l'intera sua carriera letteraria. E non l'ha trattenuto dal risposarsi a settantaquattro anni, dopo appena una dozzina di mesi di vedovanza: e di sposare una signorina che ha otto o nove lustri meno di lui.

Per cui ci sarà permesso trarre due modeste deduzioni: che l'esercizio della letteratura è eccellente per conservare il cuore giovane — e che la predicazione del pessimismo è la miglior scuola per operare col più audace ottimismo.

Guglielmo Emanuel

Nation. 5 Dec '14

THE DYNASTS IN LITTLE.

"The Dynasts": An Epic Drama. By Thomas Hardy. Produced at the Kingsway Theatre.

The Reader ...	Henry Ainley
Chorus { Strophe ...	Esmé Beringer
Chorus { Antistrophe ...	Carrie Haase
Admiral Villeneuve ...	Clarence Derwent
Nelson ...	Nicholas Hannen
Captain Hardy ...	Frederick Ross
Napoleon ...	Sydney Valentine
Lord Wellington ...	Murray Carrington

No one knows better than Mr. Granville Barker that "The Dynasts," as presented at the Kingsway Theatre, is a widely different thing from the great chronicle-play fashioned by Thomas Hardy. Its author had in view a vaster plan than to illustrate the cock-pit battling of Napoleon and England. The stage he chose was nothing smaller than the whole field of the Napoleonic wars. Nor did he allow its figures—and they were of the most extraordinary variety, salience, and power of appealing to the imagination or the ironic fancy of men—to stand alone. Behind them he grouped a supernatural chorus. This was interpretative, like the Greek chorus, and it illustrated the Æschylean idea of man as an automatic instrument in the hands of the Universal Will. But the "Intelligences" it introduced were not mere Michaels and Lucifers "on the pounce" for the soul of mankind. Mr. Hardy's idea was more modern than this. He tried to typify the Spirit of Man, hovering over the struggle, now in sympathetic lament, now as its unimpassioned recorder, and again as the ironic witness of ambition, folly, cruelty, light-mindedness, and their warning and avenging destinies. These Spirits of the Pities and Ironies, of the Mind and Heart of the Earth, broaden and melt into an invocation of the Supreme Reality of which they are the changeful image, and finally into the expression of a trembling hope that "It" may, in its final and uncomprehended purpose, be benign—that

"The Rages
Of the Ages
Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashions all things fair."

It is these two aspects of Mr. Hardy's drama—its immense range (greater than that of Tolstoy's "War and Peace"), and its spiritual complexities—which give it a poignant application to the hour. They also unfit it for stage representation. Mr. Hardy thought of "The Dynasts" as matter for "mental performance"—as indeed is all great dramatic work—or if any part of it were ever transferred to the stage, for a "dreamy" poetic rendering, with "gauzes or screens" to shut off the actual human happenings from their aerial critics and attendants. Mr. Barker has found all these methods impracticable. He has reduced the drama to the measure of the English intervention and its most striking episodes—Trafalgar, The Peninsula, Waterloo—and he has cut away its supernatural accompaniment. He gives you instead a series of cameos—not the spacious firmament, but some of the stars in it, cut, like Romeo, into little pieces. The chorus he limits to two statuesque figures, speaking in unison, from arched niches at the advanced wings of the stage. Necessarily, therefore, the entire suggestion of a world-spirit in travail disappears, and with it the metaphysical conception of the mourning or sceptical Intelligence of man, examining and appraising the wild deeds of his Will. Not less conspicuous is the loss of the full meaning of Mr. Hardy's title. To realize "The Dynasts" we ought to see the entire brilliant-bedraggled company of men and women who made millions dance to their measure; and to miss the by-play of Berlin and Vienna, and above all the dazzling figure of Alexander, is to omit the larger dramatic contrasts of the story.

Happily, there remains something in the incidental matter of "The Dynasts" to repay the artful selector. Mr. Hardy is a great rustic; his true ironic comment on life comes through the mouth of his Wessex peasants. Sly, coarse, kind, human, they soften and harmonize everything—even war. "The Dynasts" is full of their wit, set with a humorous grimness, from the woman who thinks that "Boney" would give up his taste for eating babies if he had had the "washing of 'em," to the humorist who applauds the sailors of the "Victory" for drinking dry the rum in which Nelson's body was "peckled." They neither love war nor dread it greatly, treating it rather as a freak of their betters. Mr. Barker has taken largely from these wayside conversations, and all of them are good. The most terrible of all—the picture of the drunken deserter from Moore's army in a Spanish hovel, with his dead "doxy" in his arms—is a study in "frightfulness" such as only genius knows how to render. No reporting can give such effects of war; but they bring it nearer to us than reams of "special correspondence."

The greater figures are more difficult to realize, for Mr. Hardy his had to weave into his dramatic scheme the too familiar tags of historic speech—Nelson's sentimentality (How one longed for the dying Admiral to get to his "Kiss me, Hardy," and have done with it!), Wellington's oaths and hard-hearted curtness, and Napoleon's tantrums. All these things are better described (as Tolstoy describes them) than merely versified for the stage, for Hardy's lines are apt to stump and halt, like an old soldier after the wars, lacking the famous Shaksperean *march*; while the ground he covers is so vast, and the pace at which he traverses it so tremendous, that elaborate characterization becomes impossible. But his figures stand out and yield a true dramatic illusion. Unfortunately most of them have to be omitted. Mr. Hardy's George IV. is magnificent; never was that empty ruffler better drawn. Excellent, too, is his Marie Louise, though Mr. Hardy might have found a more plastic medium for her in prose than in verse; and now and then the vast procession of monarchs, soldiers, statesmen, fribbles, spies, and lookers-on sweeps along with singular unity and grandeur of movement. The European stage to-day looks singularly poor and empty in comparison. Even the commonplace actors in the Napoleonic drama seem interesting at this distance from their surroundings. The reason may be that the entire drama suggests a hunt for the capture of the dangerous genius who broke loose from man's average environment. Francis, Metternich, George III., had no touch of greatness. But they were important factors in the scheme of Napoleon's downfall. None of them appear in the Kingsway version.

On the whole, the acting was good. Mr. Ainley's fine voice and stately manner gave the proper emphasis to the reading of the prose connecting narrative. The poetic form is harder to render. The English actor will not stress blank verse correctly; and as Mr. Hardy's lines now and then remind one of Mr. Shaw's Shaksperean parodies in "The Admirable Bashville," his task was made none the easier. You cannot make much of the art of declaiming such lines as these of Nelson's—

"Bid still the firemen bring more bucketfuls,
And dash the water into each new hole
Our guns have gouged in the 'Redoubtable,'
Or we shall all be set ablaze together."

However, Mr. Barker's method has the merit of giving sharp outline to the military protagonists, as well as a series of photographic sketches of their faces and personalities. The great difficulty was with Napoleon. Mr. Hardy makes him the great common man he was, closer, consciously and unconsciously, to the "Immanent Will" than any of his contemporaries, and driving with a single mind against a failing or a shaken world-purpose. It was this *earthiness*, this imaginative understanding of all but the finest elements in the play of human nature with which he had to deal, which yielded him his brief supremacy in politics and war. But no close student of Napoleon can make him other than a grand vulgarian. This was evidently the man whom Mr. Valentine had in his mind, and whom he shaped with much skill to the familiar Napoleonic touches of manner and deportment. Beyond this he could hardly go. Sketch-work is not drama. The Napoleonic wars were not mere pools and lakes of time; what Mr. Hardy tried to catch were the noises and scents of the stream of life as it scoured along on its way to a cataract. Now it has reached another.

H. W. M.

SVENSKA DAGBLADET 18/1 1915

Thomas Hardy Nobelpristagare?

Aftenpostens korrespondent om uppförandet af "The Dynasts".

18

Om någon engelsk författare vore förtjänt af det litterära Nobelpriset, så skulle det vara Thomas Hardy, skrifver Aftenpostens Londonkorrespondent, som äfven vet berätta att litteraturens mest betydande män i det moderna England föreslagit honom därtill. Och Thomas Hardy är onekligen hufvudet högre än de andra. Kanske är Kipling mera populär, han representerar ju det imperialistiska England, har sett och känner det brittiska världsriket bättre än någon annan, är lika hemma i exotismens Indien som i det traditionsbundna men evigt unga England.

Thomas Hardy däremot är engelsk i grund och botten. Hela hans lif, alla hans drömmar, hans djupa och genomträngande iakttagelser af människan och naturen är knuten till hans kära Wessex nere i Dorsetshire. Han har skildrat människorna där, naturen, det rika landskapet och hafvets närhet, de små byarnas lif och öden, deras gamla kultur med minnen ända från romartiden och vikingarnas härjningar. Thomas Hardy tillhör en af de gamla Wessexfamiljerna med krigarblod i ådrorna. En af hans förfäder var den tappre kapten Hardy, Nelsons trofaste vän och följeslagare, som slöt den store sjöhjältens ögon då han fann döden ombord på Victory efter slaget vid Trafalgar.

Sedan gick det utför med släkten, som i ett par generationer lefde som småbönder i Wessex, tills Thomas Hardy åter gaf namnet dess gamla glans. I likhet med de flesta af Englands ursprungliga och djupa diktare, såsom Dickens, Carlyle och Meredith, fick icke heller Thomas Hardy någon universitetsbildning. Han lärde mera af lifvet än af böckerna, utbildades först till arkitekt och kom till London samtidigt med att Darwins nya lära, hånad af de ortodoxa och mött af entusiasm och tro från ungdomen, höll sitt intåg där. Darwinismen har också satt sin prägel på honom som på så många af hans samtida. Han såg på människorna som varelser bundna af naturen och släktviljan, och bakom kulturvarelsernas slipade väsen såg han de elementära lidelserna rasa, hat och kärlek, afund och själfviskhet. Och åsynen af lifvets grymma lek med människoöden gjorde honom till en melankolisk satiriker, till den störste pessimisten i samtidens litteratur.

Thomas Hardys produktion är [illegible] öfverväldigande. Han har skrifvit historiska och moderna romaner och dikter, af hvilka en del äro öfver...

försöket att uppföra "The Dynasts". Naturligtvis har dramat mist hoskärsa grundligt, men det har gjorts af en man med konstnärlig smak under författarens öfverinseende, och på tre timmar kan man nu från Kingsway Theatres lilla scen få se Hardys store drama, där odödliga händelser ur Englands skrofulla historia upprullas och där man genom replikerna tycker sig förnimma vingslagen af historiens genius.

Man får upplefva dödscener ombord på Victory, då Nelson innan han sluter sina ögon säger till sin vän: "Kiss me, Hardy!" Man får vara med om den berömda bal som den vackra hertiginnan af Richmond gaf i Bryssel natten före slaget vid Waterloo, samma scen som Byron odödliggjort, och man får se William Pitt komma till den namnkunniga banketten i Guildhall, då han till det samlade folket uttalar de odödliga orden:

"England has saved herself, by her exertions,
She will, I trust, save Europe by her example."

Och man får följa den store Napoleon, tills hans stjärna slocknar vid Waterloo. Thomas Hardy skildrar honom i stora drag och gör hans sniile rättvisa. Efter slaget, då han känner att hans framgångs tid är slut, fäller han de melankoliska orden:

"Great men are meteors, that consume themselves
to light the earth. This is my burnt-out hour."

Där äro folklifsskildringar och värdshusscener iscensatta som endast Granville Barker kan göra det, fulla af lif och lust, med ekot af världshändelserna bland småstadsfolket i den lilla Wessexkrogen.

Intet försök har gjorts att få verklighetstrogna scenerier till stånd. Där förekommer knappast någon scenförändring, samma bakgrund, vacker och harmonisk, ersätter de lättköpta realistiska effekterna. Allt är gjordt för att diktverket och de historiska personligheterna skola komma till sin rätt: dekorationsmålaren, teatermaskinisten spela blott anspråkslösa biroller.

För att stärka sammanhanget mellan de olika scenerna läser en af teaterns bästa skådespelare från en talarstol i förgrunden upp Hardys skildringar af landskap och valplatser, medan två kvinnor i grekiska drakter representerande kören i den grekiska tragedien uttala historiens dom öfver händelserna. Måhända kommer hela det väldiga dramat att en gång när världskriget är slut uppföras i sin helhet som historiskt folkskådespel. Det blir då "The Dynast's" slutliga triumf, ty detta drama, som aldrig skrifvits för att spelas, har af världshändelserna nu fått den aktualitet som ingen skulle ha drömt om endast för några månader sedan.

THE TIMES

LITERARY SUPPLEMENT,

OCTOBER 10, 1918.

OLD SAWS AND MODERN INSTANCES. By W. L. COURTNEY. (Chapman and Hall. 10s. 6d. net.)

He compares and contrasts Aeschylus and Mr. Hardy; and while he has very nice things to say about Mr. Hardy, he is not on the side of the modern. Mr. Hardy's poetry, it appears, is the result of a bold and laborious defiance of "Nature's stern imperative 'Thou shalt not be a poet'"; not, as some had imagined, of a very personal and irresistibly powerful genius for poetry. And *The Dynasts* puzzles Mr. Courtney in his character of Victorian. Its dramatic form is due to "a certain perversity" (there are a great many "certains" and "somewhats" in this volume, and Mr. Courtney is indeed a Victorian in his use of "certain" to signify an uncertain degree); and "it will have ultimately to be judged—as, indeed, Mr. Hardy's shorter poems have to be judged—by the philosophy which underlies the whole structure." And that philosophy Mr. Courtney does not like.

Why should we, who look before and after, who are gifted with consciousness and endowed with reason, solemnly fashion as the arbiter of our destiny an abstract Energy or Will which has no consciousness, which does not know what it is doing, and which acts absolutely irrationally? Is not this—I will not say to exchange one uncertainty for another—but to replace God by Mumbo-Jumbo?

Obviously it is not, since belief in Mumbo-Jumbo entails acts of ritual and conduct which belief in the Immanent Will would not. But suppose a writer, looking before and after, gifted with consciousness and endowed with reason, sees life in a certain way, is he forbidden to fashion imaginatively (whether solemnly or not) a Power that shall conveniently represent his view of it? Mr. Courtney warns his readers that, if they cut out of *The Dynasts* all the supernatural elements, it will cease to be the piece of work which the author designed. For his own part, he seems tempted to cut out of *The Dynasts* all the natural elements and to think only of the "Overworld." And the truth is that, if you cut out of *The Dynasts*, or out of any of Mr. Hardy's works, either element, you will miss the point. Here are men and women in a set of circumstances. The circumstances include the governance, or lack of governance, by a superhuman power. The men and the women are ruled by what to them appears as their own wills and desires; they are ruled also by the power. We find that we can get very little out of Mr. Hardy unless we keep in view this double action, with its resulting intensification of interest and emotion. For can it be fairly said (putting all ideas of solemn fashioning and of Mumbo-Jumbo out of our minds) that Mr. Hardy's human beings lose in humanity, in character, in interest because he does not believe that the way is made easy for the virtuous and hard for the sinner? Are their troubles any the less moving, their failures and their successes any the less purging, uplifting, and enlarging? And as to pessimism and optimism, too much has been made of Mr. Hardy's pessimism. If pessimism is a disbelief in a trimly ordered world leading to a trim finality of reward and punishment, then Mr. Hardy is a pessimist. If optimism is no belief in a trim finality, but a passionate and admiring belief in the power of human beings to love and to endure, then Mr. Hardy, no matter what he may think about Providence and free will, is an optimist indeed.

Pall Mall Gazette. June 13. 1918

THE EVOLUTIONARY EPIC.

THOSE who are wont to imagine that old Universities are insensitive to nw things must have been agreeably surprised by the references which fell from the Public Orator at Cambridge yesterday to the work of Mr. THOMAS HARDY. One need not be "in the foremost files of time" to realise the massive qualities of Mr. HARDY's fiction—its relentless exposition of character and destiny, its rich infusion of emotional force, its sense of the dignity of life and its tender delineation of rural loveliness. Where the encomium of Sir JOHN SANDYS approves itself as a spontaneous and authoritative tribute to genius is in its reference to the great drama from Mr. HARDY's pen which has not yet secured its true place in national estimation. "Lastly," said the Public Orator, "he had outsoared the measure of all praise in achieving, in his 'Dynasts,' a great epic drama on the victories of NELSON and WELLINGTON." One would like to know what proportion of the many thousands who treasure and enjoy the portraiture of the Wessex rustic are aware of its author's work upon a sublimer theme, wrought upon lines in which the utmost flexibility harmonises with the loftiest grandeur. "The Dynasts" fell from the Press with no flop of sensation. But to the discerning it has become one of the most fascinating and uplifting achievements of the modern pen. It is the story of England's greatest hour—the long hour in which she "saved herself by her exertions and saved Europe by her example." And even that stirring appeal is made subsidiary to a vision of human destiny as spacious as HOMER and as intense as SOPHOCLES. Englishmen are coming but slowly into the possession of this epic of the Iron Age. Cambridge approves her "light and leading," not unworthily, by proclaiming that she has found it.

"The Glasgow Herald" March 8 1919

THOMAS HARDY.*

The publication of the "Dynasts" fittingly marks the completion of the "Wessex Edition of the Works of Thomas Hardy," for it is the crown of the labours of a lifetime and his highest accomplishment. The edition will be welcome to every lover of true literature. The paper is good, the type clear, and the book at once substantial and attractive. The photogravures give us the right atmosphere of Wessex, while the individuality of the author, kindly yet gravely ironic, is stamped on the edition by the prefaces and occasional notes. The various volumes are grouped into novels of character and environment, romances and fantasies, novels of ingenuity, and verse, but the one personality has breathed life into all, and the combined work has a unity rare outside of poetry, a unity at once of style and matter made complete by the deep humanity and noble simplicity of the epic-drama of Napoleon, the foremost poem of its time. Scenic brilliancy, tense drama, and broad farce there are in abundance, but all are fused into an artistic whole by the continuity of emotion that vitalises every chapter and every poem of these 20 volumes. Mr Hardy's view of life has always seemed to be summed up in the title of the second chapter of "The Return of the Native." "Humanity appears hand in hand with trouble." It is no criticism of this attitude to say that it is pessimistic, and in his general preface Mr Hardy protests against his impressions of the moment being regarded as arguments or convictions; he has recorded the truth. But truth is here personal, not historic, and his admirers know the uniform quality of these impressions. They give one tone to all his work, and lead us to the same conclusion forced on us by the "Dynasts"—that Mr Hardy is fundamentally a poet and only by training a dramatist—the latter being dominant where observation of manners is concerned, the former in all great issues. The scattered verses of his 30 working years are thus seen to be no mere fragments of an earlier world of his youth, but outcrops of a persistent structure of character, [illegible]

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Select Poems of William Barnes.

THE POETRY OF BARNES.

SELECT POEMS OF WILLIAM BARNES. Chosen and Edited by THOMAS HARDY. (Oxford Library of Prose and Poetry. Frowde, 2s. 6d. net.)

Every reader dreams as fondly sometimes of the might-have-been in literature as the forlorn lover dreams of the might-have-been in his retrospect of life. If only Charon could occasionally smuggle back an MS. across the shadows of Acheron—Sir Thomas Browne's edition of Donne, Webster's early Lyrics, the Autobiography of Christopher Marlowe! This little volume has forestalled one such vain longing and has for once become a reality. It is a selection of Barnes's poems made by Mr. Hardy. It is just one of those appropriate things so happy as to be beyond bettering.

In his introduction Mr. Hardy speaks of the slow but inevitable dying-out of the Dorset dialect, to many "an unlamented language that need leave behind it no grammar of its secrets and no key to its tomb." But the death of a language—as childhood soon desperately learns—is but the wicket-gate that opens into immortality. Dead languages are the only languages beyond the canker of time, as they are—if Erse be but a splendid exception—beyond its enrichment. But even regarding so little a language as a dialect, while it enshrines the beautiful and calm thought and feeling of such a poet as Barnes, and so much of the work of Mr. Hardy himself, the fact that it echoes less and less in living speech is not so mournful as it else would have been.

If anything, we think Mr. Hardy makes too much of the difficulties likely to beset the general, even the cockney, reader of Barnes's poetry. Much of its strangeness is due to but slight differences in spelling. Words that really require a glossary are as rare almost as they are precious; and though "the qualifying face-play and the gestures which so largely figure in the speech of husbandmen" must be beyond ordinary realization, and though the sound of the words on the inward ear of the reader bears probably but a very distant resemblance to the sound of the words as spoken, he still may gather something of their charm. Besides this, there is in a dialect a refuge from the commonplace. The mind enters, as it were, into a secret understanding with the poet through his language; it sets at once the key. Literary English cries no such "Sesame" to the imagination. And so far as mere sound is concerned the Dorset dialect had, we think, for the genius of Barnes a real advantage over classical English. There is a beautiful and slow graveness in his verse which it may not be fancy to suppose is in part due to its "v's" and "z's," and the conversion of the rather jingling "ing" of the participle into the Dorset "en." The soft drawl of the prolonged vowel sounds and the use of the auxiliaries "be" and "do" serve to enhance this effect. The few poems here included written by Barnes in other than dialect show clearly the debt it was his good fortune to owe to his beloved Dorset. It really is country English. It comes upon the ear like the distant lowing of oxen, the cawing of rooks. It is chequered like a sunny orchard, and has the age and unearthly earthiness of an old lichenous churchyard.

The chief difficulty for the lover of Barnes is to speak temperately of his admiration. His poetry, like all other poetry, is no more to be analysed than is anything else in the world that is beyond the conscious manufacture of man. To attempt to prove its loveliness, its evasive presence in the words, its quick conspiracy with the heart, its truth, would be merely to endanger one's own delight in it and to fail to convince any one not convinced already. It is unusually individual. The same voice sounds in every poem as that which haunts "To Me."

> Even if Barnes often used the dramatic form of peasant speakers as a pretext for the expression of his own mind and experiences . . . It enabled him to elude in his verse those dreams and speculations that cannot leave alone the mystery of things—possibly an unworthy mystery and disappointing if solved, though one that has a harrowing fascination for many poets.

This is an exquisite aside from the author of *The Dynasts*; and yet so far as Barnes is concerned, it would be difficult to show, except perhaps in his humorous verse, any vital distinction of personality in the poems. They all portray the same equable, tender, and all-loving nature. Each reveals the same intuition, the same uninquisitiveness, the same quiet, effortless, yet studious form of expression. Barnes certainly does not speculate in his poems. "Locksley Hall" is as far from his chosen themes as are "Bishop Blougram's Apology" and "Holy Willie's Prayer." But would he have written in a different vein had he written in his own person, without any disguising and restricting medium? He seems to have deliberately chosen for the subject of poetry only what he deemed most suitable and fitting for poetry. His depth is the clear but profound depth of simplicity. "Lwoneseomeness" is his natural place of observation. The beauty of faithful sorrow for the lost, a childlike tenderness for children, and for men whose evening casts back a colour on the east whence shone their daybreak, the magnanimity of refusing to peer too closely, and of seeking out only in his fellow-creatures what he most hoped for in himself—these are among the rare elements of the spirit that haunts his poetry. And in complete harmony with these was, of course, his style. Is there a single purple passage in the whole of his works?

The fine observation Barnes displayed so effortlessly and unassumingly is the observation of a man who glances up in reverie and saturates the small thing seen with the quiet dream and emotion out of which he saw it.

> I thought her like the vrees that flung
> His sweetness vrom his darken'd hall.

That is the beautiful comparison he makes in "The Rosebud in the Dark," to describe his "true-love" sitting with him in the moonless gloom of an open window.

> I went hwome in the dead o' the night
> When the vields wer all empty o' vo'k,
> An' the tuns at their soul-cheerful height
> Wer all dark, an' all zwold 'thout smoke.

So he shows the forlorn chimneys of "The Widow's House."

> An' orcha'd apples red hall round
> Have all a-hopper'd down.

In those two lines seems all the silence of autumn. And as if out of the strange silence in which the poet works an invisible hand had dropped lightly a fresh flower on his paper—so his inspirations seem to come:—

> Oh! the moon, wi' his pale lighted skies,
> Have his sorrowless sleepers below,
> But by day to the sun they must rise.
>
> Vor lovely wer the looks her vace
> Held up avore the western sky.

But though they do not stand out, nor ever sparkle, there is scarcely a poem of Barnes's which does not conceal some such quiet thought and tender insight. They are simply beautiful in his poetry as a child's eyes are beautiful in its face. And with a word, a hint, he confides in us what life—now and ever—means to him. As for what he omits, does not heed or mention—perhaps that is an even surer test of true poetry. We go in under the porch of his homely dialect, and we leave behind us nearly all we talk about, much of what we think, much even of what we hope for, in the roaring and dusty street of experience whose echo seems scarcely to have disquieted his sorrow or his joy.

Contemporary Review. April 1909

Mr. Hardy has done literary work of the greatest value in editing these selections from Barnes. A poet editing a poet is always a blessed spectacle to the lover of poetry. The poet knows where the honey is hid, and leads the reader from flower to flower till all grows dreamy with the sound of meadow bells—the bells of "Sweet "Be'm'ster"—or the murmur of Lyddan Brook. Barnes is a wonderful poet, and one is tempted to ask whether he has given a literature to the dying tongue of Wessex or whether his voice is the swan song of the language. In any event the Dorset tongue has secured its immortality. Barnes seemed to be writing of it when he sang

"Vor all the zun do leäve the sky,
An' all the zounds o' day do die,
An' noo mwore veet do walk the dim
Vield-path to clim' the stiel's bars,
Yet out below the rizèn stars,
The dark'nèn day mid leäve behind
Woone tongue that I shall always vind,
A-whisperèn kind, when birds be still."

There is another reason why Mr. Hardy should have edited these poems. "I chance to be (I believe) one of the few living persons "having a practical acquaintance with letters who knew familiarly "the Dorset dialect when it was spoken as Barnes writes it, or, "perhaps, who know it as it is spoken now." The speech is dying, and in order that its darkening day might leave some living record of its magic the kind fates gave it two poets. It does not, to the present writer at least, who, though not Dorset born or bred, has revelled in Barnes' poems from early childhood, it does not appear strange "that a man of insight who had the spirit of poetry in him "should have persisted year after year in writing in a fast-perishing "language, and on themes which in some not remote time would be familiar to nobody." Barnes was a poet; he had the language and he had themes local in essential colour but perennially human in ultimate fact; for him to have written in English would have been as impossible as for Dante or Milton to have written in Latin —as each once thought of doing.. Barnes could not have delivered his soul in English, and sooner than not deliver it he wrote in a tongue that he knew to be dying, and (scholar that he was) he gave it the literary form which, had it been a crescent language, it might have attained a century later.

Mr. Hardy protests too much on the question of Barnes' subtle literary form and more than Virgilian care. Who shall not say that Barnes was determined that one life of one generation should do for a dying tongue all that, in the ordinary course, would have needed many generations. At any rate, it is not for Mr. Hardy to complain at his co-worker in the accomplishment of the most sudden crystallisation of a language in the history of literature. But Barnes did not only crystallise a dialect; he gave the result to English literature. He strikes his lyric note as truly as Crawshaw or Thompson. And the note can be full of almost high Wordsworthian power, as most critics would admit who have read "The Wold Vo'k "Dead." His is the English note, thrilling as a lark thrills above some green well—a Saxon well near by his meadow-nest.

TWO GREAT MEN OF DORSET.*

THAT the Dorset poet *par excellence* of the early twentieth century, should select and edit the works of his illustrious predecessor of the mid-Victorian era, is certainly appropriate. With Thomas Hardy, the selection and arranging of the touching and tuneful verses of William Barnes, is evidently a labour of love. As the author of "The Dynasts" frankly tells us, he chances to be "one of the very few living persons having a practical acquaintance with letters who know familiarly the Dorset dialect when it was spoken as Barnes writes it, who know it as it is spoken now." "Since his death," Thomas Hardy continues, "education in the West of England, as elsewhere, is, with its silent and inevitable effacements, reducing the speech of this county to uniformity, and obliterating every year many a fine local word." Mr. Hardy regards Barnes as belonging to the literary school of such poets as Tennyson, Gray, and Collins, rather to that of the old unpremeditating singer in dialect. Primarily spontaneous, he was academic closely after. No part of England has possessed and produced so many "parson-poets" as Wessex. Crabbe and Bowles were connected with both Wilts and Dorset; Christopher Pitt was essentially a man of Dorset, just as George Herbert was essentially a Wiltshire "moon-raker," but of the five divines, Barnes alone wrote in dialect. He was first an engraver on wood, and then a schoolmaster. He was over forty when he took Holy Orders and became for the rest of his life a model parish-priest.

The glossarial notes added by Mr. Hardy are, as a rule, very important, and he gives four new and unpublished poems. The six verses, which Barnes entitles a "Christmas Invitation," exemplify sufficiently the charm and simplicity of his style. They begin:—

"Come down to-morrow night; an mind,
Don't leäve thy fiddle-bag behind;
We'll speäke a lay an' drink a cup
O eäle, to keep wold Christmas up:
. . . . . .
"An' ev'ry woone shall tell his teäle,
An' ev'ry woone shall zing his zong,
An' ev'ry woone shall drink his eäle,
To love an' frien'ship all night long.

"We'll snap the tongs, we'll have a ball,
We'll sheäke the house, we'll lift the *ruff*,
We'll romp an' meäke the maidens squall,
A catchèn o'm at blind man's buff."

The term "ruff" is not explained by the editor, but it is more difficult of comprehension to the uninitiated than either "bar" or "barken geäte." Visitors to the Dorset corner of "Wonderful Wessex" will recognise the truth as well as the indescribable charm of:—

"If you in Dorset be a-roamèn,
An' ha' business at a farm,
Then woont ye zee your eäle a-foamèn,
Or your cider down to warm!
Woont ye have brown-bread a-put ye,
An' some vinny cheese a-cut ye,
Butter?—rolls o't,
Cream?—why bowls o't,
Woont ye have, in short, your vill,
A—gi'ed with a right good will."

*THE SELECT POEMS OF WILLIAM BARNES. Chosen and Edited by Thomas Hardy. Oxford University Press. London, 1909.

Church Times.

Select Poems of William Barnes, edited by Thomas Hardy (Henry Frowde). It is probable that Mr. Barnes' Dorsetshire poems never found many readers, and as all over England dialect is disappearing before the relentless march of elementary education, they are not likely to become more popular. Few people care to read poetry when there is necessity for frequent consultation of the glossary at the end. Still Barnes was a true poet, and this volume of selections is welcome, while Mr. Hardy's introduction tells us just what is necessary and no more.

Cambridge Rev^w. 11.2.09

Select Poems of William Barnes. Chosen and edited by Thomas Hardy. London: Henry Frowde. 2/6 net.

Mr Thomas Hardy has made a selection of the poems of William Barnes which should find a warm welcome. He is, he says, one of the few living persons, having a practical acquaintance with letters, who knew familiarly the Dorset dialect when it was spoken as Barnes writes it. With some regret for the poverty of all explanations, he gives footnotes to translate the strange words. His preface is very interesting and raises a number of questions, which are worth thinking over. The gay spirit, with which Matthew Arnold made his selections, is wanting. It is not Mr Hardy's *métier* to be infallible. None the less he has given us an enjoyable little book, and added to its value by prefixing a portrait of Barnes. It is a curious physiognomy, and unless Carlyle's fancy for the portrait of any man he was studying is wholly vain, it may contribute something to a reflective reader, who asks why Barnes did so much and yet did no more. In any case it is a good addition to the book.

The College. (March 1909)

The work of William Barnes is a unique instance of the artistic use of dialect. His craftsmanship, wonderfully sustained in a large number of pieces, is compared by Mr Hardy with that of Tennyson, Gray, and Collins; the comparison is quite justifiable—indeed, it would be difficult to point to any single poet from whose work a more remarkable selection could be made. Barnes' use of the unrhymed refrain, "his ingenious internal rhymes, his subtle juxtaposition of kindred lippings and vowel sounds," his variations in dimeter, trimeter, and tetrameter are instances in point. To take an example at random, an analysis of this verse from *The Wind in Woone's Feäce* is interesting.

There lovely Jenny past,
While the blast did blow
On over Ashknowle hill
To the mill below;
A-blinkèn quick, wi' lashes long
Above her cheäks o' red,
Ageän the wind, a beätèn strong
Upon her droopèn head.

or of *In the Spring*—to be ranked among the best in the book,

O grey-leafy pinks o' the geärden,
Now bear her sweet blossoms;
Now deck wi' a rwose bud, O briar,
Her head in the Spring.

O light-rollén wind, blow me hither
The vaïce ov her talkèn,
O bring vrom her veet the light dowst
She do tread in the Spring.

While the poet sings of spring and love, of milkmaids and orchards, he is not forgetful of winter, snow and storm. There is the tempest in *Arby Wood* graphically painted.

An' there, though we mid hear the timber
Creake avore the windy rain;

and *Lydlinch Bells* is almost as chilly as the opening stanzas of *St. Agnes' Eve*,—

When skies wer peäle wi' twinklèn stars,
An' whislèn aïr a-risèn keen;
An' birds did leäve the icy bars
To vind, in woods, their mossy screen;
When vrozen grass, as white's a sheet,
Did scrunchy sharp below our veet, ...

Westminster Gazette April 5th 1909

Mr. Thomas Hardy, though his earlier appearances in print were all prose fiction, began by writing, though not publishing, lyrical verse, and the poems from his pen which have of late been finding their way into the monthly reviews seem, in some cases at least, to be early work. His new poems in the *English Review* and the *Cornhill* remind us that a very considerable and steadily increasing number of his lyrics have appeared in periodicals during the past decade, and many will hope that they may soon be collected.

Some fine poems by Mr. Hardy arising out of incidents connected with the South African war are now difficult to find, though in one or two cases they have been deservedly included in recent anthologies; others, too, such as the impressive "New Year's Poem," that appeared in the *Fortnightly Review* over three years ago, would be seen to better advantage in such a collection. For Mr. Hardy's work, by its aloofness of thought and its distinction of manner, seems in a sense out of place in periodicals, and gains in impressiveness when brought together and considered in its consistency and unity as the expression of his mind and art.

Westminster Gazette Dec. 18th 1909

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.*

Almost every one of the ninety and more poems in Mr. Thomas Hardy's new book is as characteristic of the writer as the "Wessex Tales." As a poet Mr. Hardy is not less remote from his fellows than as a romancer. A prosodic study of this volume leads to the conclusion that he is even more solitary as poet than as master of prose. Certainly he has no following; nor can we think he is ever likely to be plagued by a school. The impression of aloofness this book yields is, of course, a consequence of the remarkable individuality which, despite certain elements of sincerity and simplicity, almost baffles the analyst. For without being a master of metre of the intuitive and subtle order, Mr. Hardy achieves effects at times that penetrate and pervade our emotional consciousness with something of magic, and even of sweetness, though the form his lyrics assume is often such as is ill-adapted to be the medium of the finer poetic qualities. Stanzas that seem cast from some strange primæval mould, and may be likened to avenues or circles of Druid stones, testify to the ingenuity of the poet. Double and triple rhymes abound where the simplicity of the theme, and the primitiveness of the dramatic motif, render them the more bizarre. The rhyme-construction is so unusual, at times, that the ear forces the eye to dwell upon it, and discover, if possible, the solution of this structural singularity. Even blank verse—the most difficult measure to endow with special organic vitality—Mr. Hardy vivifies with character and cadences all his own. In "Panthera," for example, we note this individuality of artistry, even as we note something of a Miltonic character in the following passage:

> We had crossed the old flat country of Jezreel,
> The Esdraelon Plain and fighting floor
> Of Jew with Canaanite, and with the host
> Of Pharaoh-Necho, King of Egypt, met
> While crossing there to strike the Assyrian pride.
> We left behind Gilboa; passed by Nain;
> Till bulging Tabor rose, embossed to the top
> With arbute, terebinth, and locust growths.

Between the poems named "Times's Laughingstocks" and the "Other Verses" of the title-page, there is a close agreement in subject and treatment for the most part. The exceptions to which the main title does not apply are few. Thus the poems, though varying greatly as to date of composition, have as a collection true unity. The "lack of concord" Mr. Hardy speaks of in his preface is probably more obvious to the author than likely to prove disturbing to a reader. They strike us altogether, new and old alike, as being intimately connected by their common characteristics. The ironies of life, in the dramatic illustration of which Mr. Hardy is a master, find succincter, almost epigrammatic, expression in "Time's Laughingstocks," and other congenerous poems. Tragic endings of love—bitter, gloomy, sordid, treacherous—are the themes. In other examples, it may be, the mocking finger of fate indicates lovers left "naked to laughter"—to quote a pregnant phrase from what is perhaps the most profound and musical of Shelley's lyrics. The impressive poem that opens the collection—"The Revisitation"—tells of the meeting of lovers, after many years, at their old trysting-place, on the lonely down, one short summer night. He, a returned soldier, marches up to the old place from the barracks:

> Thus I walked with thoughts half-uttered
> Up the lane I knew so well, the grey gaunt lonely Lane of Slyre;
> And at whiles beneath me, far at sea, a sullen thunder muttered
> As I mounted high and higher
>
> Till, the upper roadway quitting,
> I adventured on the open drouthy downland thinly grassed,
> While the spry white scuts of conies flashed before me earthward flitting,
> And an arid wind went past.

They meet among the barrows, "immemorial funeral piles," and she sits hand-in-hand with him in the calm night:

> "It is *just* as ere we parted!"
> Said she, brimming high with joy; "and when, then, came you here, and why?"
> —"Dear, I could not sleep for thinking of our trystings when twin-hearted."
> She responded, "Nor could I."

And then he dozes, tired with his long march, and she too until, the "red upedging sun" awoke him and revealed time's ravages on her face and figure. That revelation is the catastrophe. Never was the poetry of revisiting past scenes of delight so mingled with the matter-of-fact of ironic circumstance. Of a more completely tragical cast is "The Flirt's Tragedy." Here, one tells of his rejection by a woman, and how for revenge he supplies another—"a needy Adonis"—with the means to win and to ruin her. When she is abandoned by her family and applies to him for protection he becomes repentant, meets the tool of his revenge, the "needy Adonis," and slays him. He seeks out the woman who had scorned him, marries her, and fathers her child:

> But Time unveils sorrows and secrets,
> And so it befell now;
> By inches the curtain was twitched at,
> And slowly undrew.
>
> As we lay, she and I, in the night-time,
> We heard the boy moaning:
> "O misery mine! My false father
> Has murdered my true!"

Across that revealing curtain falls another of blackest unrelieved misery. Like many another of these dramatic monologues—such as the remarkable "Trampwoman's Tragedy" or the tragical and extremely vivid poem "The Vamperine Fair"—these poems are truly narratives in condensed form, and might well have been expanded to short stories like "Life's Little Ironies." Almost all are animated by some blind fateful force, or spirit of destiny, working in dark, inexplicable ways to an end which, tragical or grotesque, is unalleviated gloom. The curious reader will note that "The Flirt's Tragedy" has but one rhyme-sound, and that each of its twenty-nine stanzas closes with it. In another writer one might suspect this to be but a *tour-de-force*. No reader of Mr. Hardy's poem will so regard it.

The types we have cited by no means represent all that is characteristic of Mr. Hardy's lyrics and monologues. Some of the most remarkable poems of the collection occur in the last section, "Pieces Occasional and Various," and in "A Set of Country Songs." Among these last is "The Homecoming." It is hardly a country song, like the rest of its companions, but a descriptive poem, with a varying ballad-like refrain which is employed with admirable art. The poem tells of the arrival of a bride at her husband's home:

> Gruffly growled the wind on Toller downland broad and bare,
> And lonesome was the house, and dark: and few came there.

It is a pettish, discontented bride, whom the husband has to soothe:

> "I didn't think such furniture as this was all you'd own,
> And great black beams for ceiling, and a floor o' wretched stone;
> And nasty pewter platters, horrid forks of steel and bone,
> And a monstrous crock in chimney. 'Twas to me quite unbeknown!"
>
> Rattle, rattle, went the door; down flapped a cloud of smoke,
> As shifting north the wicked wind assayed a smarter stroke.

The refrain intervenes in the dialogue like a bodeful chorus. "The Dead Quire," another poem which is ballad-like in spirit, if not in form, is a masterpiece. To conclude, we give ourselves the pleasure of quoting a few of the stanzas of this powerful little poem, to show how strong and telling is the progress towards the cumulative effect. It tells how the singing of the ancient church-quire was heard on Christmas morn, and thrilled the youthful revellers, sons and grandsons of the ghostly musicians, in the village inn:

> The clock belled midnight; and ere long
> One shouted, "Now 'tis Christmas morn:
> Here's to our women, old and young,
> And to John Barleycorn!"
>
> When nigh without, as in old days,
> The ancient quire of voice and string
> Seemed singing words of prayer and praise,
> As they had used to sing:
>
> "*While shepherds watched their flocks by night*"—
> Thus swells the long familiar sound
> In many a quaint symphonic flight—
> To, *Glory shone around.*
>
> * * * * * *
>
> Towards its chorded closing bar
> Plaintively, thinly waned the hymn,
> Yet lingered, like the notes afar
> Of banded seraphim.
>
> With brows abashed, and reverent tread,
> The hearkeners sought the tavern door;
> But nothing, save wan moonlight, spread
> The empty highway o'er.
>
> Then did the Quick pursue the Dead
> By crystal Froom that crinkles there,
> And still the viewless quire ahead
> Voiced the old holy air.

It ceased only as they neared the old churchyard, and the poem takes on a close proper to a "Lyrical Ballad":

> As from a dream each sobered man
> Awoke, and, musing, reached his door;
> 'Twas said that of them all, not one
> Sat in a tavern more.

* "Time's Laughingstocks, and other Verses." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan and Co.) 4s. 6d. net.

The Athenaeum Jan. 8th 1910

Time's Laughingstocks, and other Verses. By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan & Co.)

THE main impression left upon the mind after perusal of Mr. Hardy's new volume is admiration, mingled with some perplexity, at his mastery of technique. It is surprising that gifts so high should be contentedly devoted to subjects on the whole so narrow; and as we consider the manner in which these subjects are handled, we are confronted by a further problem; for how is it possible for a writer to be at the same time so poetic and so casual?

A poem, to be a poem, must be couched in language which, without error either of defect or excess, fulfils the artistic possibilities of its theme; and three parts of the theme must be looked for in the mental and emotional attitude of the producer. Poetry aims on the whole at expressing the idea of an ordered and lasting beauty and turns to human life and human ideals as the material in which the principles it seeks are manifested. Undying beauty and persistent aspiration, both established in fulfilment or recognition of unalterable law, inspire poetry, and dictate the measured cadence, the grave contour, eloquence, and impassioned diction which one associates with all that is loftiest and most splendid in poetic achievement. But if the poet, looking upon human life, decides that an abiding beauty is not what is mainly to be found there, and that ideals are so seldom realized that it is hypocrisy to be serious about them, he has still to make the artistic expression of his thought appropriate to its content; and although measure on the one hand, and passion on the other, cannot be dispensed with, both must submit to a disguise. The position is indeed strange; for unless beauty be both worshipped and claimed, the impulse to poetic expression is unintelligible. A perplexing task awaits the craftsman whose duty it is to decry in the course of his work the very instincts that brought it into being, and to build a permanent edifice out of materials which he will not himself allow to be good for anything but a house of cards. The truth seems to be that this attitude—which closely resembles Mr. Hardy's—is the outcome of a sensitiveness or idealism pushed to excess. Beauty and perfection are so passionately worshipped, so imperatively demanded, that the poet is conscious only of the imperfection of things as they are, and his own unreasonableness in expecting them to be anything but imperfect.

Mr. Hardy pursues his course with excellent skill, avoiding every pitfall. His poetic tact is unsurpassable. The temper he writes in is exactly that which could alone give credibility, artistic justice, and a natural appeal to the point of view he is expressing. That point of view is, in one word, disillusionment, and centres upon the disillusionment of love. For love, as Mr. Hardy throughout implies, is founded upon constancy, and his pictures of inconstancy, of animality even, derive their meaning and value from their background, from the quality which they exalt by presupposing.

> That which makes man's love the lighter and the woman's burn no brighter
> Came to pass with us inevitably while slipped the shortening year.....
> And there stands your father's dwelling with its blank bleak windows telling
> That the vows of man and maid are flimsy, frail, and insincere.

What is the force of such a passage as this, if not the easy nonchalance, the unconscious, conversational tone given to a statement against which every fibre of poetry in us stiffens and rebels? If it were less casual, might it not be almost offensive? As it is, we can only admire; while the magic of language conquers the sceptical sing-song.

If we were asked to name the man whose work Mr. Hardy's most resembles on its technical side, we should without hesitation name Browning. It would be easy to quote a score of passages out of this volume which might have been written by either of them:—

> We kissed at the barrier, and passing through
> She left me, and moment by moment got
> Smaller and smaller;

or,

> Yet I wonder,
> Will it sunder
> Her from me?
> Will she guess that
> I said "yes,"—that
> His I'd be,
> Ere I thought she might not see him as I see?

and, with the exception of a word or two here and there, several entire poems. The difference between them is that Mr. Hardy, in using these queer conversational forms, almost always manages to convey, not only a sense of propriety in them, which is frequent in Browning also, but a pleasing illusion that the language has adapted itself by magic to his merely momentary needs. How often, in completing his more eccentric patterns, Browning jumps and struggles, like an unruly child, against the stern restraint of his mother-tongue! Mr. Hardy, whether the line is long or short and the rhyme is in one or two or three syllables, is always at his ease:—

> We Christmas-carolled down the Vale, and up the Vale, and round the Vale,
> We played and sang that night as we were yearly wont to do—
> A carol in the minor key, a carol in the major D,
> Then at each house: "Good wishes: many Christmas joys to you!"

When he roughens the metre, it is because he wishes, not because he is forced, to do so; and now and then he draws an overwhelming effect from deliberate violation of his scheme:—

> O vision appalling
> When the one believed-in thing
> Is seen falling, falling,
> With all to which hope can cling.

Mr. Hardy is, in fact, casual or conversational in tone, but not in workmanship

The quality we have pointed to—power under the mask of nonchalance—performs a still more important service in Mr. Hardy's verse than any we have yet mentioned. There is an obvious poetic appeal, a sentiment of easy pathos, attached to unrealizable desire. Effort, consistency, and other forces that tend to bring desires to realization or to correct their bearings, operate in a humdrum manner. The poet cannot be bothered with them. If, for example, lovers insist on marrying and "settling down," the lyric poet wishes them good-day, and if he has a touch of petulance in him, as on this topic Mr. Hardy has undeniably, he will have nothing to do with their children either.

However, our point is that, if the poetry of the unrealizable is taken as a mainspring of inspiration, the danger besetting the poet will be that of overtaxing its resources, and revealing, to those who come to him for refreshment, how shallow they are. Mr. Hardy is not beyond reproach on this point, so far as the matter of his volume is concerned; but the faultlessness of his manner redeems the mistake. The sensitiveness to beauty which his writing reveals, and the contained idealism which unsuccessfully hides itself under the cloak of the religious or social revolutionary, never tempt him into a fatal extravagance, never draw him over the line that separates the poet from the cynic and the sentimentalist. Maintaining thus a perfect equilibrium, bringing to his themes the utmost illumination of which they are susceptible, avoiding at once the snares of false enchantment and facile indignation, he achieves the poetry of irony:—

> I saw him steal the light away
> That haunted in her eye:
> It went so gently none could say
> More than that it was there one day
> And missing by-and-by.
>
> I watched her longer, and he stole
> Her lily tincts and rose;
> All her young sprightliness of soul
> Next fell beneath his cold control,
> And disappeared like those.
>
> I asked: "Why do you serve her so,
> Do you, for some glad day,
> Hoard these her sweets—?" He said, "O no,
> They charm not me; I bid Time throw
> Each promptly to decay."
>
> Said I: "We call that cruelty—
> We, your poor human kind."
> He mused. "The thought is new to me.
> Forsooth, though I men's master be,
> Theirs is the teaching mind!"

A noble poem inscribed "G. M. 1828–1909" stimulates what must in any case have been a natural impulse—the impulse to compare Mr. Hardy's poetry with that of another great writer of our time who, like Mr. Hardy, was less known as a poet than as a novelist:—

> He was of those whose wit can shake
> And riddle to the very core
> The counterfeits that Time will break.

It is interesting that, in his tribute to Meredith, Mr. Hardy should have singled out for remark, among many qualities that distinguished the master's work, the great and salient quality which he shares with him. Like Meredith, Mr. Hardy, whatever else he disbelieves in, believes in the strength and permanence of truth. Like Meredith, he aims at adhering in his poetry with scrupulous care to the facts which he believes to be before him. His conception of what the facts are is as different from Meredith's as it could be, and perhaps it is a conception which provides poetic material more readily. But Mr. Hardy will not, any more than would Meredith, have poetry at the expense of truth; and thus the same influence which curbed Meredith's optimism, curbs Mr. Hardy's pessimism, and where Meredith denied wings to Aspiration, Mr. Hardy offers no laurel to Despair.

> O sweet sincerity!—
> Where modern methods be
> What scope for thine and thee?
>
> Life may be sad past saying,
> Its greens for ever graying,
> Its faiths to dust decaying;
>
> And youth may have foreknown it,
> And riper seasons shown it,
> But custom cries: "Disown it:
>
> Say ye rejoice, though grieving,
> Believe, while unbelieving,
> Behold, without perceiving!"
>
> —Yet, would men look at true things,
> And unilluded view things,
> And count to bear undue things,
>
> The real might mend the seeming,
> Facts better their foredeeming,
> And Life its disesteeming.

Mr. Hardy's picture, therefore, however dark, has the ultimate dignity of artistic faithfulness, and this noble quality governs both his attitude to his conceptions and his treatment of details. His execution has everywhere a vibrating precision, even when the mood is languorous; everywhere we have the pleasure as we read of feeling that a definite effect was intended, and has been produced with exquisite delicacy. Thus it comes about that the same faculty which has made Mr. Hardy a master of rustic tragedy, and which has placed the great drama of history within his grasp, enables him also to handle the subtlest of themes and analyze the most transient of emotions with an exactitude worthy of the great names in our literature.

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LITERATURE.

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

TIME'S LAUGHING-STOCKS, and other Verses. By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.)

The battle is still not to the strong, nor the victory to youth. There have been a good many volumes of poetry published this year; but has there been one that surpasses or equals this in the indefinable quality of greatness by which human productions survive? We have so many poets of the younger generation who can say what they have to say in admirable verse; only, unhappily, what they have to say is not a great deal. Here, on the other hand, is a veteran, whose natural medium is really not verse at all, but whose mind is so full of living energy of thought, his heart so big with human sympathy, his voice ringing so clear with sincerity and strength, that he at once compels all listeners to give him the full hearing which they deny to the rather meaningless accomplishment of his younger

wonder, tenderness, and silence. "The heart still overrules the head," especially as age brings on the disillusions of the intellect, while the heart has its refuge from all disillusions in a love which never despairs. We begin by offering fools—that is, the people with whom we disagree—their choice between the Koran of our opinions or the sword of our intellectual contempt; but the wisest of us end by putting the sword in its sheath, and leaving the Koran to make its way by its own virtues. It is possible to be tenderer to fools than Mr. Hardy is even now; but it is noticeable that, so far as can be judged, it is not "the folly of it" but "the pity of it" which is the note of the later poems.

The book has plenty of variety. There are a number of sonnets, the work of a man who is always observing and thinking about life, and, being an artist, always wanting to give expression to his thoughts and observations. Like the sonnets of Shakespeare and Meredith, they show a wonderful power of getting some momentary intellectual or emotional experience subtly and exactly shaped upon the paper; but Mr. Hardy is not primarily a poet, and consequently his sonnets have not that music of the mind of which the most crabbed problem hardly ever robs Shakespeare. Here is one of the best, "The Minute before Meeting":—

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> Seemed hopeless hills my strength must faint to climb,
> But they are gone; and now I would detain
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> A full-up measure of felicity.

One can imagine Shakespeare enjoying the task of working out that analysis of a lover's experience; and perhaps Mr. Hardy's sonnet would not have been what it is if Shakespeare's sonnets had never been written. All poets are subject to the influence of their great predecessors and contemporaries; it is part of the sensitiveness of the poetic temperament to be so: but perhaps it comes out most in poets who have the temperament without the inborn gift which expresses itself naturally and primarily in verse. So Mr. Hardy in these "Love Lyrics," as he calls the second section of his poems, will remind us sometimes of Shakespeare, sometimes of Meredith, and then sometimes of Browning, as, for instance, in the stanzas called "In the Crypted Way":—

> In the crypted way where the passage turned
> To the shadowy corner that none could see,
> You paused to part from me,—plaintively;
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> And then I kissed you,—despite my thought
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> But yet I kissed you; whereon you again
> As of old kissed me. Why, why was it so?
> Do you cleave to me after that light-tongued blow?
> If you scorned me at eventide, how love then?

The Athenaeum Jan. 8th 1910

Time's Laughingstocks, and other Verses. By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan & Co.)

THE main impression left upon the mind after perusal of Mr. Hardy's new volume is admiration, mingled with some perplexity, at his mastery of technique. It is surprising that gifts so high should be contentedly devoted to subjects on the whole so narrow; and as we consider the manner in which these subjects are handled, we are confronted by a further problem; for how is it possible for a writer to be at the same time so poetic and so casual?

A poem, to be a poem, must be couched in language which, without error either of defect or excess, fulfils the artistic possibilities of its theme; and three parts of the theme must be looked for in the mental and emotional attitude of the producer. Poetry aims on the whole at expressing the idea of an ordered and lasting beauty and turns to human life and human ideals as the material in which the principles it seeks are manifested. Undying beauty and persistent aspiration, both established in fulfilment or recognition of unalterable law, inspire poetry, and dictate the measured cadence, the grave contour, eloquence, and impassioned diction which one associates with all that is loftiest and most splendid in poetic achievement. But if the poet, looking upon human life, decides that an abiding beauty is not what is mainly to be found there, and that ideals are so seldom realized that it is hypocrisy to be serious about them, he has still to make the artistic expression of his thought appropriate to its content; and although measure on the one hand, and passion on the other, cannot be dispensed with, both must submit to a disguise. The position is indeed strange; for unless beauty be both worshipped and claimed, the impulse to poetic expression is unintelligible. A perplexing task awaits the craftsman whose duty it is to decry in the course of his work the very instincts that brought it into being, and to build a permanent edifice out of materials which he will not himself allow to be good for anything but a house of cards. The truth seems to be that this attitude—which closely resembles Mr. Hardy's—is the outcome of a sensitiveness or idealism pushed to excess. Beauty and perfection are so passionately worshipped, so imperatively demanded, that the poet is conscious only of the imperfection of things as they are, and his own unreasonableness in expecting them to be anything but imperfect.

Mr. Hardy pursues his course with excellent skill, avoiding every pitfall. His poetic tact is unsurpassable. The temper he writes in is exactly that which could alone give credibility, artistic justice, and a natural appeal to the point of view he is expressing. That point of view is, in one word, disillusionment, and centres upon the disillusionment of love. For love, as Mr. Hardy throughout implies, is founded upon constancy, and his pictures of inconstancy, of animality even, derive their meaning and value from their background, from the quality which they exalt by presupposing.

> That which makes man's love the lighter and the woman's burn no brighter
> Came to pass with us inevitably while slipped the shortening year.....
> And there stands your father's dwelling with its blank bleak windows telling
> That the vows of man and maid are flimsy, frail, and insincere.

What is the force of such a passage as this, if not the easy nonchalance, the unconscious, conversational tone given to a statement against which every fibre of poetry in us stiffens and rebels? If it were less casual, might it not be almost offensive? As it is, we can only admire; while the magic of language conquers the sceptical sing-song.

If we were asked to name the man whose work Mr. Hardy's most resembles on its technical side, we should without hesitation name Browning. It would be easy to quote a score of passages out of this volume which might have been written by either of them:—

> We kissed at the barrier, and passing through
> She left me, and moment by moment got
> Smaller and smaller;

or,

> Yet I wonder,
> Will it sunder
> Her from me?
> Will she guess that
> I said "yes,"—that
> His I'd be,
> Ere I thought she might not see him as I see?

and, with the exception of a word or two here and there, several entire poems. The difference between them is that Mr. Hardy, in using these queer conversational forms, almost always manages to convey, not only a sense of propriety in them, which is frequent in Browning also, but a pleasing illusion that the language has adapted itself by magic to his merely momentary needs. How often, in completing his more eccentric patterns, Browning jumps and struggles, like an unruly child, against the stern restraint of his mother-tongue! Mr. Hardy, whether the line is long or short and the rhyme is in one or two or three syllables, is always at his ease:—

> We Christmas-carolled down the Vale, and up the Vale, and round the Vale,
> We played and sang that night as we were yearly wont to do—
> A carol in the minor key, a carol in the major D,
> Then at each house: "Good wishes: many Christmas joys to you!"

When he roughens the metre, it is because he wishes, not because he is forced, to do so; and now and then he draws an overwhelming effect from deliberate violation of his scheme:—

> O vision appalling
> When the one believed-in thing
> Is seen falling, falling,
> With all to which hope can cling.

Mr. Hardy is, in fact, casual or conversational in tone, but not in workmanship him. Like Meredith, Mr. Hardy, whatever else he disbelieves in, believes in the strength and permanence of truth. Like Meredith, he aims at adhering in his poetry with scrupulous care to the facts which he believes to be before him. His conception of what the facts are is as different from Meredith's as it could be, and perhaps it is a conception which provides poetic material more readily. But Mr. Hardy will not, any more than would Meredith, have poetry at the expense of truth; and thus the same influence which curbed Meredith's optimism, curbs Mr. Hardy's pessimism, and where Meredith denied wings to Aspiration, Mr. Hardy offers no laurel to Despair.

> O sweet sincerity!—
> Where modern methods be
> What scope for thine and thee?
>
> Life may be sad past saying,
> Its greens for ever graying,
> Its faiths to dust decaying;
>
> And youth may have foreknown it,
> And riper seasons shown it,
> But custom cries: "Disown it:
>
> Say ye rejoice, though grieving,
> Believe, while unbelieving,
> Behold, without perceiving!"
>
> —Yet, would men look at true things,
> And unilluded view things,
> And count to bear undue things,
>
> The real might mend the seeming,
> Facts better their foredeeming,
> And Life its disesteeming.

The quality we have pointed to—power under the mask of nonchalance—performs a still more important service in Mr. Hardy's verse than any we have yet mentioned. There is an obvious poetic appeal, a sentiment of easy pathos, attached to unrealizable desire. Effort, consistency, and other forces that tend to bring desires to realization or to correct their bearings, operate in a humdrum manner. The poet cannot be bothered with them. If, for example, lovers insist on marrying and "settling down," the lyric poet wishes them good-day, and if he has a touch of petulance in him, as on this topic Mr. Hardy has undeniably, he will have nothing to do with their children either.

However, our point is that, if the poetry of the unrealizable is taken as a mainspring of inspiration, the danger besetting the poet will be that of overtaxing its resources, and revealing, to those who come to him for refreshment, how shallow they are. Mr. Hardy is not beyond reproach on this point, so far as the matter of his volume is concerned; but the faultlessness of his manner redeems the mistake. The sensitiveness to beauty which his writing reveals, and the contained idealism which unsuccessfully hides itself under the cloak of the religious or social revolutionary, never tempt him into a fatal extravagance, never draw him over the line that separates the poet from the cynic and the sentimentalist. Maintaining thus a perfect equilibrium, bringing to his themes the utmost illumination of which they are susceptible, avoiding at once the snares of false enchantment and facile indignation, he achieves the poetry of irony:—

> I saw him steal the light away
> That haunted in her eye:
> It went so gently none could say
> More than that it was there one day
> And missing by-and-by.
>
> I watched her longer, and he stole
> Her lily tincts and rose;
> All her young sprightliness of soul
> Next fell beneath his cold control,
> And disappeared like those.
>
> I asked: "Why do you serve her so,
> Do you, for some glad day,
> Hoard these her sweets—?" He said, "O no,
> They charm not me; I bid Time throw
> Each promptly to decay."
>
> Said I: "We call that cruelty—
> We, your poor human kind."
> He mused. "The thought is new to me.
> Forsooth, though I men's master be,
> Theirs is the teaching mind!"

A noble poem inscribed "G. M. 1828–1909" stimulates what must in any case have been a natural impulse—the impulse to compare Mr. Hardy's poetry with that of another great writer of our time who, like Mr. Hardy, was less known as a poet than as a novelist:—

> He was of those whose wit can shake
> And riddle to the very core
> The counterfeits that Time will break.

It is interesting that, in his tribute to Meredith, Mr. Hardy should have singled out for remark, among many qualities that distinguished the master's work, the great and salient quality which he shares with

Mr. Hardy's picture, therefore, however dark, has the ultimate dignity of artistic faithfulness, and this noble quality governs both his attitude to his conceptions and his treatment of details. His execution has everywhere a vibrating precision, even when the mood is languorous; everywhere we have the pleasure as we read of feeling that a definite effect was intended, and has been produced with exquisite delicacy. Thus it comes about that the same faculty which has made Mr. Hardy a master of rustic tragedy, and which has placed the great drama of history within his grasp, enables him also to handle the subtlest of themes and analyze the most transient of emotions with an exactitude worthy of the great names in our literature.

The Times

LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

LONDON, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 1909. Issued Weekly with The Times.

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LITERATURE.

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One can imagine Shakespeare enjoying the task of working out that analysis of a lover's experience; and perhaps Mr. Hardy's sonnet would not have been what it is if Shakespeare's sonnets had never been written. All poets are subject to the influence of their great predecessors and contemporaries; it is part of the sensitiveness of the poetic temperament to be so: but perhaps it comes out most in poets who have the temperament without the inborn gift which expresses itself naturally and primarily in verse. So Mr. Hardy in these "Love Lyrics," as he calls the second section of his poems, will remind us sometimes of Shakespeare, sometimes of Meredith, and then sometimes of Browning, as, for instance, in the stanzas called "In the Crypted Way":—

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> If you scorned me at eventide, how love then?

After all, the question one comes more and more often to ask, whether consciously or unconsciously, about literature is whether there is anything real behind it. Mere dexterity, however assured and professional, leaves the middle-aged reader increasingly cold. The thing that ultimately tells is the thing which never fails with Mr. Hardy, a sense of big issues, of something large and high, something the very reverse of trivial, in the poet's outlook upon life. That is the eternal difference between cleverness and greatness in all the arts—between Stothard, for instance, with all his genuine and delightful gifts, and Blake with all his very real limitations. And no one who has read anything of Mr. Hardy's novels, or "The Dynasts," or even these poems, can for a moment be unaware that he is in the company of a man who does not live in a little world. The great impression is everywhere, in the songs and the sonnets and occasional pieces; everywhere, perhaps, except in some rather meaningless verses written during the last election about a candidate's wife. But it is perhaps present most of all in what is most characteristic of Mr. Hardy, nearest to the Hardy of the novels, the striking ballads and other pieces which make up the first section of the volume. It is they that give their name "Time's Laughing-stocks" to the whole book; and again and again throughout the volume it is that old sense of the vastness of Time and the littleness of human doings and sufferings that gives them a touch of something humbly akin to sublimity. It is the essence, for instance, of "The Two Rosalinds," of "The House of Hospitalities," of "Autumn in the Park," of "1967," "Night in the Old Home," "Before Life and After," and many others. Many of these are meditations of the sort which can be guessed by readers of the novels, of the sort which help to give the novels their great double life, a visible drama enacted by certain persons before our eyes, and an invisible drama, the procession of ages, not seen, but felt to be enacted by invisible actors behind a curtain which we know to be only a curtain. But, even more than these, perhaps, the things here that will stick in the memory are the two or three tragic ballads, especially "A Tramp Woman's Tragedy" and the "Sunday Morning Tragedy," which latter also happens to be the finest piece of pure verse in the book. It is no small accomplishment to have successfully, and without producing a sensation of artifice, rhymed the second and fourth lines of all the thirty-four stanzas to the word "me." And the sad story is worth the pains lavished on it. But perhaps the "Tramp Woman" is still finer. The scene lies in Wessex, and every word is pure Hardy, a picture signed all over. It is too long to quote in full; but here are some of the thirteen stanzas:—

From Wynyard's Gap the livelong day,
The livelong day,
We beat afoot the northward way
[illegible]
The sun-blaze burning on our backs,
Our shoulders sticking to our packs,
By fosseway, fields, and turnpike tracks
We skirted sad Sedge-Moor.

Full twenty miles we jaunted on,
We jaunted on,—
My fancy man, and jeering John,
[illegible]
And, as the sun drew down to west,
We climbed the toilsome Poldon crest,
And saw, of landskip sights the best,
The inn that beamed thereby.

. . . . . .

Lone inns we loved, my man and I,
My man and I;
"King's Stag," "Windwhistle" high and dry,
"The Horse" on Hintock Green,
The cozy house at Wynyard's Gap,
"The Hut" renowned on Bredy Knap,
And many another wayside tap
Where folk might sit unseen.

Now as we trudged—O deadly day!
O deadly day!—
I teased my fancy man in play
And wanton idleness.
I walked alongside jeering John,
I laid his hand my waist upon:
I would not bend my glances on
My lover's dark distress.

Thus Poldon top at last we won,
At last we won,
And gained the inn at sink of sun
Far-famed as "Marshal's Elm."
Beneath us figured tor and lea,
From Mendip to the western sea—
I doubt if finer sight there be
Within this royal realm.

Inside the settle all a-row—
Ay, all a-row
We sat, I next to John, to show
That he had wooed and won.
And then he took me on his knee,
And swore it was his turn to be
My favoured mate, and Mother Lee
Passed to my former one.

Then in a voice I had never heard,
I had never heard,
My only Love to me: "One word,
My doxy, if you please!
Whose is the child you are like to bear?—
His? After all my months o' care?"
God knows 'twas not! But, O despair,
O doubt not but I told him then,
I told him then,
That I had kept me from all men
Since we joined lips and swore.
Whereat he smiled, and thinned away
As the wind stirred to call up day . . .
—'Tis past! And here alone I stray
Haunting the Western Moor.

There is no mistaking the ring of that. It is the well-known voice, the voice of the poet of Wessex, and of the heart of Wessex. For the poet is the novelist, and the novelist the poet.

The Daily News Dec. 13th 1909

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.

"Time's Laughingstocks." By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 4s. 6d.

This sheaf of verses covers the whole of Mr. Hardy's productive career, some being dated as long ago as 1865. In one of the later ones he says: "Too fragrant was Life's early bloom, Too tart the fruit it brought"; but one looks in vain even in the earlier poems for any hint of the fragrance of that "early bloom." Throughout the key is minor, the outlook that of disillusion and despair. All is vanity—the past a realm of the ghosts of happiness, the present a time full of tender regrets and memories, the future a blank—

With nothing left of me or you
In that live century's vivid view
Beyond a pinch of dust or two.

He writes a love lyric in his youth, and his thought turns to the worm and eternal night—"For I would only ask thereof that thy worm should be my worm, Love." And at the end of the journey the note is only changed by being charged with sad memories of the past as well as of sombre broodings on the future. Thus "Night in the Old Home":

When the wasting embers redden the chimney-breast,
And Life's bare pathway looms like a desert track to me,
And from hall and parlour the living have gone to their rest,
The perished people who housed them here come back to me.

They come and seat them around in their mouldy places,
Now and then bending towards me a glance of wistfulness,
A strange upbraiding smile upon all their faces,
And in the bearing of each a passive tristfulness.

"Do you uphold me, lingering and languishing here,
A pale late plant of your once strong stock?" I say to them;
"A thinker of crooked thoughts upon Life in the sere,
And on That which consigns men to night after showing the day to them?"

"—O let be the Wherefore! We severed our years not thus:
Take of Life what it grants, without question!" they answer me seemingly.
"Enjoy, suffer, wait: spread the table here freely like us,
And, satisfied, placid, unfretting, watch Time away beamingly!"

This is the note throughout. "New Year's Eve" brings no New Year's hopes.

"I have finished another year," said God,
"In grey, green, white, and brown;
I have strewn the leaf upon the sod,
Sealed up the worm within the clod,
And let the last sun down."

"And what's the good of it?" I said.
"What reasons made you call
From formless void this earth we tread,
When nine-and-ninety can be read
Why nought should be at all?

There is no answer, and New Year's Day opens with a new chapter in the never-ending, inscrutable play. He sees the joy of the young mother brooding over her new-born child; but he hears the voice of her mother's spirit telling her of the ancient illusion of motherhood:

"Source of ecstatic hopes and fears
And innocent maternal vanity,
Your fond exploit but shapes for tears
New thoroughfares in sad humanity.

"Yet as you dream, so dreamt I
When Life stretched forth its morning ray to me;
Other views for by and by!" . . . .
Such strange things did mother say to me."

And in another poem he pictures the rapture of "John and Jane," lit by a light "that cannot wane," the light of their wondrous baby-child. But it is all an illusion, and the poem finishes with a sudden projection into the future:

They rate the world as a gruesome place,
Where fair looks fade to a skull's grimace,—
As a pilgrimage they would fain get done—
Do John and Jane with their worthless son.

Even the comedy of this remorseless vision is the comedy that springs from the universal tragedy. The old labourer has come to the workhouse at last—

"'Tis hard; but," I thought, "never mind it:
There's gain in the end:
And when I get used to the place I shall find it
A home, and may find there a friend.
"Life there will be better than t'other,
For peace is assured.
The men in one wing and their wives in another
Is strictly the rule of the Board."

But the young curate of the parish was humane and modern, and at his passionate urgency the Board, having "pooh-ed and pish-ed," had agreed to letting the old people abide in one wing together. It is the last blow to the old man—

I thought they'd be strangers aroun' me,
But she's to be there!
Let me jump out o' waggon and go back and drown me
At Pummery or Ten-Hatches Weir.

The poems we like best are the "Sunday Morning Tragedy" and "The Dead Quire." The first deals with an unpleasant subject, but it has the true ballad spirit and a sombre simplicity and dirge-like rhythm that will ensure it a place in literature. In "The Dead Quire" Mr. Hardy sings, as it were, his own dirge. It recalls the theme of his most joyous and one of his earliest works—"Under the Greenwood Tree." The quire that made that book immortal is dead

"Old Dewy lay by the gaunt yew tree,
And Reuben and Michael a pace behind,
And Bowman with his family.
By the wall that the ivies bind."

It is Christmas Eve once more, but the still air resounds no longer to the ancient songs of praise and in the village inn the descendants of the quire are engaged in revelries "not divine." In the midst of the carousals there comes from without the sound of voices singing words of prayer and praise as of old.

"While Shepherds watched their flocks by night,—
Thus swells the long familiar sound
In many a quaint symphonic flight—
To Glory shose around."

The roysterers are shocked into awed silence. With reverent tread they seek the tavern door. "But nothing, save wan moonlight spread. The empty highway o'er." They follow the aerial music by the crystal Froom to the churchyard, where Dewy and the elder lay—

"As from a dream each sobered son
Awoke, and musing reached his door:
'Twas said that of them all, not one
Sat in a tavern more."

What makes this poem gleam like a jewel in the midst of this heap of dust and ashes? It is because for once we escape the dungeon of Mr. Hardy's night thoughts and remember that despair and disillusion are not all, but that the stars still shine above, and that the aerial music of hope and love and joy may still be heard if we will but listen.

The technical side of Mr. Hardy's poetry has been sufficiently illustrated. He gives one the impression of a man working with hard, unyielding materials from which with labour he wrings his painful harmonies. His scheme of verse is sometimes discordant and unmanageable as in "The Revisitation." No matter how you read it you cannot get music from its measure. And his language, too, has singular lapses into sheer prose. But at times he triumphs over his unsympathetic materials and wrings from them the pure spirit of poetry. But it is poetry which brings no joy, and for once that one will turn to this book one will turn a hundred times to T. E. Brown, whose spirit was of the twilight too, but who did not ring down the curtain of the night with Mr. Hardy's dogmatic negation.

Reviews.

TRAGIC LIFE.*

It is remarkable that the two greatest novelists of our time (or of the time that is just ending) should both have written poetry of a kind that is possibly more individual and more challenging than their prose fiction. Perhaps, however, that is not so very remarkable; although at first blush one might suppose a novelist would put his most intense work into the form of art which had become the chief nature of his creative mind. But if he does not make of his poetry a pleasant escape from peering into the keen weather of reality, he will be likely to make it the quintessence of his inspiration. George Meredith was not the man, and Mr. Thomas Hardy is certainly not the man, to desire any escape from reality; and therefore we find that the poetry of each is of this quintessential, intensely personal kind. We have no intention of concluding from this that the poetry of Meredith and Mr. Hardy is of more worth than their novels; it would be a rash brain that would attempt to decide the question of values in such a matter. But it is a point worth remembering when we consider the critical estimates placed upon the fiction and the poetry of these two great writers. The poetry of the man whose main intellectual habit has been poetry, will rarely be the quintessence of his inspiration; for he will probably find it convenient, both for himself and for those to whom he ministers, to employ, like an apothecary, some vehicle to carry the essence. The same may be said of the man whose chief mental activity has been inventing fiction; his novels will contain his inspiration enclosed in a comparatively inert vehicle. And while the inspiration is the vital and important thing, it is often the vehicle that makes it assimilable and not too confounding in its pungency. For an essence, in truth, is not always a very potable liquor; its flavors are too burning and too amazing for many palates, and, it may be, its fierce medicinal qualities too noticeable.

It is easy to see, then, that many who will delightedly drink of an inspiration when it is mixed and somewhat dulcified in a vehicle, in a novel, for instance, will find the same inspiration rather choking and perhaps repellent

Hardy's poetry will come to be recognised as being quite as notable and as honorable as his fiction.

Anyone who desires that poetry should show the way to keen, delicious raptures of thought and feeling, that it should always be ecstatic adoration of the First Beauty, will assuredly be disappointed in "Time's Laughingstocks." But there is never anything to be gained by limiting in our critical ideas the scope and purpose of poetry; and there is, moreover, a very large body of magnificent poetry in our literature to which Mr. Hardy's verse corresponds exactly, both in its positive and its negative qualities, its achievement, and its austerity. The primary aim of Mr. Hardy's poetry is the exhibition of tragic life, of the ceaseless conflict between the conscious personal will in life and "the all-immanent Will" that wields the "vast material pomp of force." So that he can do this, he is not greatly concerned about the sweet concord of words; the tragedy is the thing. And Mr. Hardy has now arrived at a marvellous precision and nicety of practice. He can give us in a few stanzas the whole bitter, struggling tragedy of a life, the consciousness of a man or a woman trapped in the ruthless procession of the world and hurried clean against personal will into anguish. There are few tears in Mr. Hardy's poetry; the sorrow of the life we see in it is dry-eyed, an agony too sharp for weeping. To be presented, in perhaps half a hundred lines, with a tragedy that would have been powerful enough if written out in a full-length novel, is something that many will hardly desire. Yet we think Mr. Hardy's example an extremely salutary one to the poets of to-day, who tend to remove their work further and further from the hard, pitiable experiences of every-day humanity. To find anything closely comparable to Mr. Hardy's poetry, we must go back to the old ballads; not to the supernatural, riding, or battle ballads, but to those noble ones which deal with tragic events among ordinary people. Dunbar speaks of "ballat-making" and "tragedie" in a breath; and many of the ballads deserve the dignity for their intense preoccupation with and profound knowledge of the human soul. This is the spirit of Mr. Hardy's poems; but to this is superadded a great speculative vision of the general drift of a world-enthralled humanity. There is no poetry of our time, and little, outside the dramatic, in all our literature, that can equal Mr. Hardy's, especially in this latest volume of his, for a revelation of tragic life. In most of the poems of "Time's Laughingstocks," the villain of the piece is, as we might expect, Time itself; it is astonishing, for instance, how frequently and with what tremendous effect Mr. Hardy uses such a trite theme as the decay of a woman's charm. Throughout the volume there are only a few poems that we cannot call the distillation into its perfect essence of a human tragedy. The urge of sex is evident in most; Mr. Hardy's vision of life is too true to underestimate the terrible value of passion in the human play. And in every tragedy there is some psychological subtlety that makes it unique. "A Trampwoman's Tragedy," the dreadful but superb "Sunday Morning Tragedy," "The Flirt's Tragedy"—these are perhaps the three greatest poems. But in "A Wife and Another" and "The Noble Lady's Tale," we have situations not mortally tragic, but nevertheless revealing the bare lineaments of character, as quicklime reveals the bones of a corpse, in a way that makes them altogether unforgettable. There are several poems that cannot come quite under the heading of tragedy, such as some brilliant sonnets and the (usually ironic) love-poems; or as a few philosophic lyrics, like "Wagtail and Baby" and "Yell-ham-wood's Story," or the fine poem on George Meredith; or again the remarkable version of the old legend of Christ's fatherhood, "Panthera," or those poems which are direct questionings, of, or, rather, accusations against, the Power behind life.

All these are fine; but the most notable contributions to English poetry in this volume are, after all, those poems which are poems chiefly by virtue of their intense concentration of tragic human life. Matter and manner are absolutely married in Mr. Hardy's verse. It is never a subject enclosed in poetry; seldom can we find in it any decorative phrasing, words not demanded by the central emotion. It is the common rough experience of humanity, not joined to poetry, but made poetry, fused into poetry. And when we say that the subject, the tragedy, is the thing in Mr. Hardy's

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.

15.12.09.

(To the Editor of "The Daily News.")

Sir,—I notice that, in reviewing "Time's Laughingstocks, and Other Verses," after omitting the second part of the title, you say: "Throughout . . . the outlook is that of disillusion and despair"—repeating the assertion more than once in slightly different words. If this were true it might be no bad antidote to the grinning optimism nowadays affected in some quarters; but I beg leave to observe that of the ninety odd poems the volume contains, more than half do not answer to the description at all—as can be seen by a mere glance through it—while of the remainder many cannot be so characterised without exaggeration. I shall, therefore, feel obliged if you will correct the misstatement.—Yours, etc.,

Dec. 13. THOMAS HARDY.

After all, the question one comes more and more often to ask, whether consciously or unconsciously, about literature is whether there is anything real behind it. Mere dexterity, however assured and professional, leaves the middle-aged reader increasingly cold. The thing that ultimately tells is the thing which never fails with Mr. Hardy, a sense of big issues, of something large and high, something the very reverse of trivial, in the poet's outlook upon life. That is the eternal difference between cleverness and greatness in all the arts—between Stothard, for instance, with all his genuine and delightful gifts, and Blake with all his very real limitations. And no one who has read anything of Mr. Hardy's novels, or "The Dynasts," or even these poems, can for a moment be unaware that he is in the company of a man who does not live in a little world. The great impression is everywhere, in the songs and the sonnets and occasional pieces; everywhere, perhaps, except in some rather meaningless verses written during the last election about a candidate's wife. But it is perhaps present most of all in what is most characteristic of Mr. Hardy, nearest to the Hardy of the novels, the striking ballads and other pieces which make up the first section of the volume. It is they that give their name "Time's Laughing-stocks" to the whole book; and again and again throughout the volume it is that old sense of the vastness of Time and the littleness of human doings and sufferings that gives them a touch of something humbly akin to sublimity. It is the essence, for instance, of "The Two Rosalinds," of "The House of Hospitalities," of "Autumn in the Park," of "1967," "Night in the Old Home," "Before Life and After," and many others. Many of these are meditations of the sort which can be guessed by readers of the novels, of the sort which help to give the novels their great double life, a visible drama enacted by certain persons before our eyes, and an invisible drama, the procession of ages, not seen, but felt to be enacted by invisible actors behind a curtain which we know to be only a curtain. But, even more than these, perhaps, the things here that will stick in the memory are the two or three tragic ballads, especially "A Tramp Woman's Tragedy" and the "Sunday Morning Tragedy," which latter also happens to be the finest piece of pure verse in the book. It is no small accomplishment to have successfully, and without producing a sensation of artifice, rhymed the second and fourth lines of all the thirty-four stanzas to the word "me." And the sad story is worth the pains lavished on it. But perhaps the "Tramp Woman" is still finer. The scene lies in Wessex, and every word is pure Hardy, a picture signed all over. It is too long to quote in full; but here are some of the thirteen stanzas:—

From Wynyard's Gap the livelong day,
The livelong day,
We beat afoot the northward way
We had trudged there times before,
The sun-blaze burning on our backs,
Our shoulders sticking to our packs,
By fosseway, fields, and turnpike tracks
We skirted sad Sedge-Moor.

Full twenty miles we jaunted on,
We jaunted on,—
My fancy man, and jeering John,
And Mother Lee, and I.
And, as the sun drew down to west,
We climbed the toilsome Poldon crest,
And saw, of landskip sights the best,
The inn that beamed thereby.

. . . . . .

Lone inns we loved, my man and I,
My man and I;
"King's Stag," "Windwhistle" high and dry,
"The Horse" on Hintock Green,
The cosy house at Wynyard's Gap,
"The Hut" renowned on Bredy Knap,
And many another wayside tap
Where folk might sit unseen.

Now as we trudged—O deadly day!
O deadly day!—
I teased my fancy man in play
And wanton lightness.
I walked alongside jeering John,
I laid his hand my waist upon:
I would not heed my glances on
My lover's dark distress.

Thus Poldon top at last we won,
At last we won,
And gained the inn at sink of sun
Far-famed as "Marshal's Elm."
Beneath us figured tor and lea,
From Mendip to the western sea—
I doubt if finer sight there be
Within this royal realm.

Inside the settle all a-row—
Ay, all a-row
We sat, I next to John, to show
That he had wooed and won.
And then he took me on his knee,
And swore it was his turn to be
My favoured mate, and Mother Lee
Passed to my former one.

Then in a voice I had never heard,
I had never heard,
My only Love to me: "One word,
My dear, if you please!
Whose is the child you are like to bear?—
His? After all my months o' care?"
God knows 'twas not! But, O despair!
O doubt not but I told him then,
I told him then,
That I had kept me from all men
Since we joined lips and swore.
Whereat he smiled, and thinned away
As the wind stirred to call up day . . .
—'Tis past! And here alone I stray
Haunting the Western Moor.

There is no mistaking the ring of that. It is the well-known voice, the voice of the poet of Wessex, and of the heart of Wessex. For the poet is the novelist, and the novelist the poet.

The Daily News Dec. 13th 1909

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.

"Time's Laughingstocks." By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 4s. 6d.

This sheaf of verses covers the whole of Mr. Hardy's productive career, some being dated as long ago as 1865. In one of the later ones he says: "Too fragrant was Life's early bloom, Too tart the fruit it brought"; but one looks in vain even in the earlier poems for any hint of the fragrance of that "early bloom." Throughout the key is minor, the outlook that of disillusion and despair. All is vanity—the past a realm of the ghosts of happiness, the present a time full of tender regrets and memories, the future a blank—

With nothing left of me or you
In that live century's vivid view
Beyond a pinch of dust or two.

He writes a love lyric in his youth, and his thought turns to the worm and eternal night—"For I would only ask thereof that thy worm should be my worm, Love." And at the end of the journey the note is only changed by being charged with sad memories of the past as well as of sombre broodings on the future. Thus "Night in the Old Home":

When the wasting embers redden the chimney-breast,
And Life's bare pathway looms like a desert track to me,
And from hall and parlour the living have gone to their rest,
The perished people who housed them here come back to me.

They come and seat them around in their mouldy places,
Now and then bending towards me a glance of wistfulness,
A strange upbraiding smile
faces,
And in the bearing of each
ness.

"Do you uphold me, lingeri
ing here,
A pale late plant of
stock?" I say to them;
"A thinker of crooked tho
in the sere,
And on That which consign
after showing the day t
"—O let be the Wherefor
our years not thus:
Take of Life what it
question!" they answer,
"Enjoy, suffer, wait: spread
freely like us,
And, satisfied, placid, unfretti
away beamingly!"

This is the note through
Year's Eve" brings no
hopes.

"I have finished another y
"In grey, green, white,
I have strewn the leaf upon
Souled up the worm within t
And let the last sun do

"And what's the good of it
"What reasons made yo
From formless void this ear
When nine-and-ninety can be
Why nought should be a

There is no answer, and N
opens with a new chapter
ending, inscrutable play.
of the young mother broo
new-born child; but he h
of her mother's spirit tell
ancient illusion of mother

"Source of ecstatic hope
And innocent maternal vanit
Your fond exploit but
New thoroughfares in sad h

"Yet as you dream, so
When Life stretched forth
to me!
Other views for by and by
Such strange things did moth

And in another poem he pi
ture of "John and Jane,"
"that cannot wane," tha
wondrous baby-child. But

illusion, and the poem finishes with a sudden projection into the future:

They rate the world as a gruesome place,
Where fair looks fade to a skull's grimace,—
As a pilgrimage they would fain get done—
Do John and Jane with their worthless son.

Even the comedy of this remorseless vision is the comedy that springs from the universal tragedy. The old labourer has come to the workhouse at last—

"'Tis hard; but," I thought, "never mind it:
There's gain in the end:
And when I get used to the place I shall find it
A home, and may find there a friend.

"Life there will be better than t'other,
For peace is assured.
The men in one wing and their wives in another
Is strictly the rule of the Board."

But the young curate of the parish was humane and modern, and at his passionate urgency the Board, having "poohed and pished," had agreed to letting the old people abide in one wing together. It is the last blow to the old man—

I thought they'd be strangers aroun' me,
But she's to be there!
Let me jump out o' waggon and go back
and drown me
At Pummery or Ten-Hatches Weir.

The poems we like best are the "Sunday Morning Tragedy" and "The Dead Quire." The first deals with an unpleasant subject, but it has the true ballad spirit and a sombre simplicity and dirge-like rhythm that will ensure it a place in literature. In "The Dead Quire" Mr. Hardy sings, as it were, his own dirge. It recalls the theme of his most joyous and one of his earliest works—"Under the Greenwood Tree." The quire that

Reviews.

TRAGIC LIFE.*

It is remarkable that the two greatest novelists of our time (or of the time that is just ending) should both have written poetry of a kind that is possibly more individual and more challenging than their prose fiction. Perhaps, however, that is not so very remarkable; although at first blush one might suppose a novelist would put his most intense work into the form of art which had become the chief nature of his creative mind. But if he does not make of his poetry a pleasant escape from peering into the keen weather of reality, he will be likely to make it the quintessence of his inspiration. George Meredith was not the man, and Mr. Thomas Hardy is certainly not the man, to desire any escape from reality; and therefore we find that the poetry of each is of this quintessential, intensely personal kind. We have no intention of concluding from this that the poetry of Meredith and Mr. Hardy is of more worth than their novels; it would be a rash brain that would attempt to decide the question of values in such a matter. But it is a point worth remembering when we consider the critical estimates placed upon the fiction and the poetry of these two great writers. The poetry of the man whose main intellectual habit has been poetry, will rarely be the quintessence of his inspiration; for he will probably find it convenient, both for himself and for those to whom he ministers, to employ, like an apothecary, some vehicle to carry the essence. The same may be said of the man whose chief mental activity has been inventing fiction; his novels will contain his inspiration enclosed in a comparatively inert vehicle. And while the inspiration is the vital and important thing, it is often the vehicle that makes it assimilable and not too confounding in its pungency. For an essence, in truth, is not always a very potable liquor; its flavors are too burning and too amazing for many palates, and, it may be, its fierce medicinal qualities too noticeable.

It is easy to see, then, that many who will delightedly drink of an inspiration when it is mixed and somewhat dulcified in a vehicle, in a novel, for instance, will find the same inspiration rather choking and perhaps repellent when they meet with it in essence. This has been true of many of Mr. Hardy's lyrical poems—for what we have been saying obviously cannot apply to "The Dynasts"; and we are sure it will be true of Mr. Hardy's latest volume of lyrics, "Time's Laughingstocks." Putting "The Dynasts," which everyone now acknowledges to be a splendid piece of work, on one side, many of Mr. Hardy's sincerest admirers have seriously doubted whether his poetical work could be in any way reckoned as considerable as his fiction, whether, indeed, he could be properly reckoned a poet at all. We believe this to be largely due to the fact that, not desiring to mix, as in his novels, his utterance with any vehicular stuff, he has in his poems reduced the mighty but discomforting inspiration of "The Mayor of Casterbridge" and "Jude the Obscure" to a harsh, fiery essence, an essence in many ways even more disconcerting than the heady spirit of Meredith's poetry. And in "Time's Laughingstocks" Mr. Hardy's tremendous power is more disconcertingly essentialised than ever. It follows, moreover, that his poetry, being of this nature, will, like Meredith's, be written in a style in sharp contrast with most contemporary poetical styles; we find in it so little of what modern poetry gives us, so much that modern poetry carefully avoids, that many may, not excusably, yet not unnaturally, wonder if we can strictly call such writing poetry, or at any rate good poetry. Another reason for the misprision of Mr. Hardy's poetry is one that it is not possible to combat, and that is, the common English disinclination to believe that a man who has famously succeeded in one form of art can also succeed as notably in another, quite different form. This prejudice, the unusual manner of his verse, and the intensely concentrated iron-bitter spirit of it, have all worked against Mr. Hardy's reputation as a poet. Yet, as in the parallel but widely separated instance of Meredith, we believe that Mr. Hardy's poetry will come to be recognised as being quite as notable and as honorable as his fiction.

Anyone who desires that poetry should show the way to keen, delicious raptures of thought and feeling, that it should always be ecstatic adoration of the First Beauty, will assuredly be disappointed in "Time's Laughingstocks." But there is never anything to be gained by limiting in our critical ideas the scope and purpose of poetry; and there is, moreover, a very large body of magnificent poetry in our literature to which Mr. Hardy's verse corresponds exactly, both in its positive and its negative qualities, its achievement, and its austerity. The primary aim of Mr. Hardy's poetry is the exhibition of tragic life, of the ceaseless conflict between the conscious personal will in life and "the all-immanent Will" that wields the "vast material pomp of force." So that he can do this, he is not greatly concerned about the sweet concord of words; the tragedy is the thing. And Mr. Hardy has now arrived at a marvellous precision and nicety of practice. He can give us in a few stanzas the whole bitter, struggling tragedy of a life, the consciousness of a man or a woman trapped in the ruthless procession of the world and hurried clean against personal will into anguish. There are few tears in Mr. Hardy's poetry; the sorrow of the life we see in it is dry-eyed, an agony too sharp for weeping. To be presented, in perhaps half a hundred lines, with a tragedy that would have been powerful enough if written out in a full-length novel, is something that many will hardly desire. Yet we think Mr. Hardy's example an extremely salutary one to the poets of to-day, who tend to remove their work further and further from the hard, pitiable experiences of every-day humanity. To find anything closely comparable to Mr. Hardy's poetry, we must go back to the old ballads; not to the supernatural, riding, or battle ballads, but to those noble ones which deal with tragic events among ordinary people. Dunbar speaks of "ballat-making" and "tragedie" in a breath; and many of the ballads deserve the dignity for their intense preoccupation with and profound knowledge of the human soul. This is the spirit of Mr. Hardy's poems; but to this is superadded a great speculative vision of the general drift of a world-enthralled humanity. There is no poetry of our time, and little, outside the dramatic, in all our literature, that can equal Mr. Hardy's, especially in this latest volume of his, for a revelation of tragic life. In most of the poems of "Time's Laughingstocks," the villain of the piece is, as we might expect, Time itself; it is astonishing, for instance, how frequently and with what tremendous effect Mr. Hardy uses such a trite theme as the decay of a woman's charm. Throughout the volume there are only a few poems that we cannot call the distillation into its perfect essence of a human tragedy. The urge of sex is evident in most; Mr. Hardy's vision of life is too true to underestimate the terrible value of passion in the human play. And in every tragedy there is some psychological subtlety that makes it unique. "A Trampwoman's Tragedy," the dreadful but superb "Sunday Morning Tragedy," "The Flirt's Tragedy"—these are perhaps the three greatest poems. But in "A Wife and Another" and "The Noble Lady's Tale," we have situations not mortally tragic, but nevertheless revealing the bare lineaments of character, as quicklime reveals the bones of a corpse, in a way that makes them altogether unforgettable. There are several poems that cannot come quite under the heading of tragedy, such as some brilliant sonnets and the (usually ironic) love-poems; or as a few philosophic lyrics, like "Wagtail and Baby" and "Yell-ham-wood's Story," or the fine poem on George Meredith; or again the remarkable version of the old legend of Christ's fatherhood, "Panthera," or those poems which are direct questionings, of, or, rather, accusations against, the Power behind life.

All these are fine; but the most notable contributions to English poetry in this volume are, after all, those poems which are poems chiefly by virtue of their intense concentration of tragic human life. Matter and manner are absolutely married in Mr. Hardy's verse. It is never a subject enclosed in poetry; seldom can we find in it any decorative phrasing, words not demanded by the central emotion. It is the common rough experience of humanity, not joined to poetry, but made poetry, fused into poetry. And when we say that the subject, the tragedy, is the thing in Mr. Hardy's

* "Time's Laughingstocks, and Other Verses." By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.

poetry, we must by no means be understood to mean that he is careless of technique. On the contrary, the technique is exceedingly highly wrought, and usually takes the form of a difficult but ringing stanza, and a very strict system of rhyme. We will quote the opening stanzas of three poems; they will show the purity of his diction as well as the deftness of his metres and rhymes. Only those, however, who read the whole book can fully realise the extraordinary appropriateness of the diction and the metre to the mood. This is the beginning of "The Revisitation," an ironic story of love lost and found:—

"As I lay awake at night-time
In an ancient country barrack known to ancient cannoneers,
And recalled the hopes that heralded each seeming brave and bright time
Of my primal purple years."

Here is the first verse of "A Trampwoman's Tragedy," a magnificent ballad of a jest's grim consequence, a tale that would have made a noble play:—

"From Wynyard's Gap the livelong day,
The livelong day,
We beat afoot the northward way
We had travelled times before.
The sun-blaze burning on our backs,
Our shoulders sticking to our packs,
By fosseway, fields, and turnpike tracks
We skirted sad Sedge-Moor."

And here is the stanza of "The Rash Bride," a swinging measure that makes the sorry tale all the more pitiable:—

"We Christmas-carolled down the Vale, and up the Vale, and round the Vale,
We played and sang that night as we were yearly wont to do—
A carol in a minor key, a carol in the major D.
Then at each house: 'Good wishes: many Christmas joys to you!'"

Nor are lines memorable for themselves lacking; though in poetry of such austere and elemental nature they are necessarily rare. But who could forget this admirable line?:—

"The wind of winter mooed and mouthed their chimney like a horn."

And there is plenty of phrasing as fine as this, of a childbirth:—

"Source of ecstatic hopes and fears
And innocent maternal vanity,
Your fond exploit but shapes for tears
New thoroughfares in sad humanity."

But no poet is so difficult to represent in quotation as Thomas Hardy, for the simple reason that we must quote each poem in entirety to show its real greatness, its vivid revelation of psychology, and the perfect union of theme and medium. For Hardy-enthusiasts it is worth mentioning, perhaps, that Marty South and the Mellstock Quire reappear, the appearance of the latter, for those who can read it properly, being as grievous a tragedy as any; and throughout the book it is Wessex, Wessex all the way.

For spiritual exaltation or for radiant visionary beauty, we must, assuredly, go to other poets; but for a vision of humanity, of humanity nobly and stubbornly enduring slings and arrows, for stern questionings of comfortable morality ("A Wife and Another," and "The Dark-Eyed Gentleman" force us, in a few verses, to see morality for ourselves as clearly as any whole play of Ibsen's), for high and purging tragedy made, not out of the lives of queens and princes, but out of the lives of tramps and farmwomen—for such qualities as these we can go to no poet of our time but to Thomas Hardy.

TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS.

By Thomas Hardy. *Macmillan & Co.* 4s. 6d. net.

The publication of a new volume by Thomas Hardy must be an event of importance, because he is the one literary giant of the Victorian age now living and working amongst us. No serious student of Thomas Hardy (and he is worth serious study) can doubt for a moment that he is essentially a poet, one who sees the beauty of Nature, the tragedy of human life in its struggling with the power of fate, in which struggle it always partly holds its own, but is never absolute master. There are many scenes in nearly all the novels which are obviously the work of a poet, and no man but a poet could have conceived or written "The Mayor of Casterbridge." But it is noticeable that on a first reading of his actual verse the poetry is less obvious; it is partly hidden by the skilled craftsmanship, which shows that the author has not a complete mastery over his material. He is fascinated by and too much occupied with the variety of the metres that he uses; he is always skilful, but we do not find here the metrical triumphs of Poe or Swinburne, nor Tennyson's power over the music of words. We do not at first experience pleasure or enjoyment, but we can at once admire; and when we understand that we require to give more thought and attention to what we are reading, we soon perceive that we are in the hands of a master, and any criticism or judgment of ours becomes an impertinence.

The poems in this volume have been collected from many years. There is, of course, great variety, and yet there is a certain unity about them which shows that the attitude of the author towards life has been consistent. Life is always to him eminently worth living; complete satisfaction cannot be found; fate, if not always cruel, is very often ironical; he sees a certain dignity and strength in human nature, and though he is a pessimist he has no cowardly despair.

Mr. Hardy has a real affection for, and an intimate knowledge of the "human" nature in man; his fearless facing of facts gives a certain bitterness, which might perhaps be diminished if he saw more of the spiritual nature.

The verses, "Let me enjoy"—

Let me enjoy the earth no less
Because the all-enacting Right
That fashioned forth its loveliness,
Had other aims than my delight.

About my path there flits a Fair,
Who throws me not a word or sign;
I will find charm in her uncare,
And laud those lips not meant for mine.

From manuscripts of moving song,
Inspired by scenes and souls unknown,
I'll pour out raptures that belong
To others as they were my own.

Perhaps some day towards Paradise
And all its blest—if such should be—
I shall lift glad, afar-off eyes,
Though it contain no place for me.

are very characteristic of his attitude towards life.

A very intelligent, and on the whole admiring, critic of this volume says that there is nothing noble in it. It seems to me that he has not looked deep enough; he cannot see below the ironic humour the fact that the author sees that, however imperfect life may be, it is always worth living. It is not Mr. Hardy's reason which shows him this, but his unbending courage, and the sense of dignity and the strange and always unexplained complexity of human character. Real and sincere art, when it is the "expression of emotion," which comes from actual contact with life, must always be ennobling, because it helps one, if not to understand, at any rate to sympathise. One must admit that something is lacking in this volume, but as far as it goes it is a picture of actual life drawn with sympathy and a brave fearlessness, and makes one understand that those aspects of life, which can easily be vulgarised, are in reality a beautiful as well as necessary part of the order of nature.

J. H. AUSTIN.

REVIEWS.

TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS.

"Time's Laughingstocks." By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan. 1909. 4s. 6d. net.

WE are content to appreciate these verses—very diverse in date and by no means equal in quality—without regard to the general question how far Mr. Thomas Hardy has treated the world justly, for more than a decade, by concentrating his art within the medium of verse. Viewed simply as a literary phenomenon the thing is singular, and every admirer of the writer's genius must have pondered it with much conjecture. Obviously this recourse to verse, in the case of Mr. Hardy, is rather a deliberate self-restraint than an effusion of pent energy. His work in bulk (he seems to say) is complete; but he is still willing to distil for us in the short poem drops of the unmistakable essence. In his preface to these verses he hopes "they will, as a whole, take the reader forward, even if not far, rather than backward". The modesty and self-judgment are quite characteristic. Certainly it would be unfair to say that we have nothing fresh in this volume. Anything that is truly Mr. Hardy's has freshness, for, however recognisable by this time the sentiment and atmosphere of his verse may be, they are always conveyed to us by direct observation of things and visualised with that unfading interest which concrete life, clearly seen, always possesses. This direct observation of actual things is the sheet-anchor of the fully matured artist. The poet who deals in pure ideas cannot outlive his vernal prime. It is part of our general frailty that ideas, in themselves, soon tarnish. They must be bright with youth if they are to hold us. In repetition they are tedious. But the face of visible nature is inexhaustible. Wordsworth at the age of seventy could note, as for the first time, the beauty of the mountain-daisy's "star-shaped shadow thrown on the smooth surface of a naked stone"; and his characteristic wish that this beauty were known to the "mountain-daisy's self"—a notion almost tritely familiar, in general, to Wordsworthians—thrills us with a delicate novelty, drawn from the particular and exquisite image itself. Here lies the charm of Mr. Hardy's autumnal verse. The emotions he excites in us are just those in which all his work is steeped; but such emotions, in the mystery of art, are inseparable from the sights and sounds of nature which embody them, and Mr. Hardy's eye and ear are still open to new impressions. He turns from "the Christmas blaze" within the room to "the frosty scene outside", where a starving thrush "toils to reach a rotting berry". This is the sort of little picture, seized at first hand, which keeps ever living and poignant his tragic view of life. Take a verse, again, of the sad little poem "The Farm-Woman's Winter", and note the strength it gains from the descriptive phrase of the third line:

> "If seasons all were summers,
> And leaves would never fall,
> And hopping casement-comers
> Were foodless not at all,
> And fragile folk might be here
> That white winds bid depart;
> Then one I used to see here
> Would warm my wasted heart!"

Not least among the elements which give vigour and reality to Mr. Hardy's verse is his indifference to the so-called "poetic" vocabulary. The arts of prose and of verse are so different that a writer like Mr. Hardy, master of a dreamy prose music unrivalled in our literature, could hardly be expected to throw off, in his by-product of verse, a note of lyric freedom and sweetness. He is, in fact, too wise to make the attempt. Seeing life essentially as a poet—all his novels prove this—he is content to employ the verse-form just so far as his own vocabulary, acquired by years of the prose habit, is compatible with sincere expression in verse. The result, challenging of course no comparison with the purer lyric masterpieces, is by no means without a piquant music of its own. It is justified, as verse, by the standard which alone justifies a work of art, namely, in that it expresses, unmistakably and intimately, the personality of the writer.

> "They come and seat them around in their mouldy places,
> Now and then bending towards me a glance of wistfulness,
> A strange upbraiding smile upon all their faces,
> And in the bearing of each a passive tristfulness."

To complain of "roughness" in Mr. Hardy's verse, as some people complain, is to set up once more that false ideal of smooth artifice which nowhere makes its deadly effect more obvious than in minor verse. The same sort of people who find a "prosaic" quality in such lines as these were offended formerly by the number of juxtaposed consonants in Matthew Arnold's lines. No doubt the weak side of the Tennyson tradition, which makes a teapot "a fluttering urn", has been mainly responsible for these quaint but prevalent notions about verse technique. At least it is cheering to find that a great novelist, who has always been at heart a poet, may turn to verse, if he be so inclined, and there produce an expression of himself not inadequate, by very reason of his indifference to schoolboy notions of what verse is.

Covering a range of forty years or more, these verses are instinct with Wessex feeling and life. Mainly dramatic, their very titles have the flavour of the essential Hardy—"The Curate's Kindness", "The Rejected Member's Wife", "Reminiscences of a Dancing Man", "The Dead Quire", "By the Barrows", "The Vampirine Fair", "One Ralph Blossom Soliloquises". The title "Time's Laughingstocks", though it is applied only to one division of the volume, sums up more or less the sentiment of the whole, as we should expect. That introspective pathos which is founded on the mere transiency of life, the loss of youth, has always played a large part in the sombre beauty of the novels. In this order of pathos, indeed, Mr. Hardy is supreme master, and inevitably it tinges all these poems. There are not wanting, also, some of those general speculations, audaciously uttered, on man's destiny and the scheme of the universe; the same spirit, in fact, which informed the more mystical side of his great panorama "The Dynasts". "New Year's Eve" is the boldest of the poems in this vein.

The whole book—while almost every poem in it would admit of some charmingly characteristic quotation—is really a book for possession by all who care for Mr. Hardy's genius. We can go through the volume page by page and find touches that recall, with new vividness, the world of the novels and marvellous short stories: The church choirs and country dances, shadows of the graveyard yew, rustic quaintnesses and heartaches, the spreading heath whose colour is lost in our sense of windy desolation and elemental space, the cruelties and cross-purposes of existence, all touched with that strangely romantic hand at once so exotic and so intensely English, inhabit this book once again and gain something of poignancy, if that were possible, by the brevity of these utterances. We do not pretend that we should think so much of the verses, or read so much into them, if we had not read the author's prose work. But our admiration is not therefore to be dubbed adventitious. It is the privilege of every great artist thus to create an atmosphere of appreciation. That he should win us back to the old pleasure, in some of its old intensity, even by brief reminders of himself, is the natural reward of his work as a whole. The spell which writers like Mr. Hardy know how to cast is always cumulative in its effect.

BÜLOW.

"Le Prince de Bülow." Par André Tardieu. Paris: Calmann-Lévy. 1909. 3fr. 50c.

A CONSIDERABLE portion of this work, if not the whole, has already appeared in the "Revue des Deux Mondes". We still possess reviews in this country which will occasionally devote a few pages to

CHILDREN'S BOOKS.

To the Editor of the SATURDAY REVIEW.

61 Belgrave Road S

SIR,—When you are good enough to publ
article of mine, such as my recent criticism of
children's books, courtesy to yourself demands
should answer any comment on it. Otherwise
I should have ventured to ignore the letter of Mr
Wolfe, which bears every mark of having been
from a lunatic asylum.

Mr. Wolfe begins by expressing his affable ce
that no one reads anything I write; then he pr
to adopt several statements of mine about chi
literature as his own, and apply them—so far a
understand his incoherent sentences, which, to be
is not very far—to children's picture-books; the
requiring my attention, he is good enough t
"every bit as badly as does the story-book".

These things being, on the whole, among th
artistic work produced in modern Europe, I
with much emphasis to have my criticism of child
ture extended to them. Mr. Wolfe is quite at
to call these books "vulgar" and "stupid",
say that they have "fallen on evil days"; thou
opinion of a person who believes that up to a po
for a time "children like anything" would,
merely provoke a smile among persons like mys
live in this nursery world from year's end to year
but I object to having my name mixed up wi
nonsensical criticism.

The illustrations of children's story-books, eve
of the trashy stories about which I was writi
mostly excellent; and the mere picture-books, f
old Nuremburg toy-book where you pull a str
cause every animal to make its proper noise
riotous wit of "Buster Brown", down to t
popular "rag-books", could hardly be improve
only a pity that so many of these should be
and printed in America and Germany. W
English publishers and toy-makers condescend
the works of genius displayed in the Kaiserst
Nuremburg, or the Nain Bleu of Paris, and co
and do likewise—or better—in London?

EDWARD H. Co

DID MR. PICKWICK FAST?

To the Editor of the SATURDAY REVIEW.

SIR,—Reference to the Minutes of the Pickwic
Chapter I., and to the clear statement of the
at the beginning of Chapter IV., which expla
spirit in which he lays on "important facts
r and gentle stream to a world thirsti
ckwickian knowledge, will, I think, help us
plaining the seeming "oversights" to whic
correspondents call attention.

We are promised authentic accounts of im
facts judiciously arranged and impartially narrat
I notice in reading the "Papers" that refer
such details as food and time are chiefly made
is necessary to introduce some important ch
incident, or story, and that otherwise they are
over. Why do your correspondents suggest t
kwick had no dinner, or that he ought t
ived at Gray's Inn at two o'clock? The fact
was accompanied by a man whose knowledge of
was "extensive and peculiar" affords good g
for believing that the inner man was not neglect
that thus the delay was accounted for. "S
"Coming, sir." "How long you have been!"
was something behind the door, sir" (cap. 26
we want to be told what that was? We may
suppose that Mr. Pickwick and his companions
overcome by their troublesome journey to Mano
that they would not be inclined for food or to
any such trifle; but we find that the homely su
duly recorded, because Mr. Pickwick "thought h
never felt so happy in his life". Neither Winkl
Snodgrass were in a state to think of food afte
events of the previous night, and in view of the ple

Country Life Dec. 11th 1909 7

POETRY is a word used to designate many different species of literature. Its closest associations are with the hopes, yearnings and passions of youth. With the minor poet of to-day it often means only so many "airy nothings" lightly and elegantly treated. It is compact of conventions and deals in a tender or melancholy, gay or solemn manner with death, love and other subjects equally old. They are embellished with such embroidery as talent may invent. Much of it is sweet and a good deal of it watery. Very different is the result when Thomas Hardy strings his lyre. Only a short time ago he brought to a conclusion his huge amorphous "Dynasts," and now he places before the reader a number of productions under the sinister title, *Time's Laughing-Stocks* (Macmillan). It is a counterpart in verse of "Life's Little Ironies," only more mordant, bitter and sad. The poetry is not that of youth but of philosophy. Many good critics would deny its claim to the title of poetry, mainly because the language and versification lack melody, that first essential to good verse. Mr. Hardy, before sitting down to write, takes care that he has something to say, and he says it without any waste of words and with a strict economy of ornament; but he is not an Orpheus whose melody bids "the wild swan pause in her cloud, and the lark drop down at his feet." The joy of living is not one of his themes, and he enters into no rivalry with such songs as "O my love is like a red, red rose." His strong and vivid imagination dwells upon the disappointment, bitterness and illusions of life. It is poetry of elderly life and old age, even when composed, as many of the poems were, when the author was in his prime. And if the language is not as musical as that of a Shelley or a Swinburne, it makes up for it by its sincerity and unmistakability of meaning. The vocabulary employed is that of a writer who is more careful of meaning than of music. He has an Oriental fondness for repeating words. As in certain writings the Indian girl has eyes like brown bees, so the Hardy girl has cheeks like pæonies.

"Whom the gods love die young" is a phrase that assumes new meaning in the light of his sardonic genius. The death-bed consolation of Julie-Jane is a philosophy in itself:

> "I suppose," with a laugh she said,
> "I should blush that I'm not a wife.
> But how can it matter, so soon to be dead,
> What one does in life?"

The poem from which this is taken is, perhaps, the most perfect thing in the book. The author's scorn of convention and respectability is nowhere more apparent than in "The Conformers," where the man speaking agrees, "Yes, we'll wed, my little fay," and they shall go live in "a villa chastely gray," and then "our game of passion will be played, our dreaming done." How keen is the urbane satire in the last verse:

> When down to dust we glide
> Men will not say askance,
> As now: "How all the country side
> Rings with their mad romance!"
> But as they graveward glance
> Remark: "In them we lose
> A worthy pair, who helped advance
> Sound parish views."

Whoever would like to understand why Mr. Hardy is fascinated by the illusions and bitter ironies of life may be referred to the little poem called "To Sincerity." In it he pleads that the eye should lay aside its hypocrisies and sham optimism, so that they may

> . . . look at true things,
> And unilluded view things,
> And count to bear undue things,

If this were done, then

> The real might mend the seeming,
> Facts better their foredeeming,
> And Life its disesteeming.

Such is his message. Its clothing is that of the country-side. In no other book has Mr. Hardy shown his familiarity with the weaknesses, characters, aims and misdeeds of the rustic labourer. We do not say of Wessex, because his local colour is purely accidental. That these poems emanated from Dorset only shows that Dorset is extremely like other counties, and that Mr. Hardy's instinct makes him to select unerringly the universal facts of human nature from the mass of local details. Therein lies the root of his greatness.

REVIEWS

THOMAS HARDY'S NEW POEMS

Time's Laughing-stocks. By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan. 4s. 6d.)

"TIME'S Laughing-stocks" is a fitting title for Mr. Hardy's poems, just as "Life's Little Ironies" would be a suitable substitute for the titles of the majority of his novels. His attitude is well known from his earlier work, and the new poems do not modify that attitude. Underlying it is the sense that "the world is a welter of futile doing":—

> "Crass casualty obstructs the suns and rain,
> And dicing time for gladness casts a moan."

As Walter Pater wrote of another and very different *désillusionné*, almost everywhere he can detect the "hollow ring of fundamental nothingness under the apparent surface of things. Irony, habitual irony, must be the proper complement thereto, on his part." Mr. Hardy's poems are sung by the Spirit Ironic, and are filled with the sense of the vastness of time, the littleness of human suffering and endeavour, and the pity of it. In these new poems there is hardly even that note of doubtful hope contained in the chorus of the Pities, at the close of his tremendous drama. But apart from his attitude towards life, there is some discordant quality in many of these poems which prevents the greatest of living writers from being the greatest of living poets: his great light seems to struggle through a dark lantern.

Yet what more do we want, when we get in these poems, at their best, a noble and unaffected plainness, an intellectual depth of motive, a "hard acorn of thought," even in less favoured moments; a style simple, direct, and above all truthful and unconcerned; a style singularly individual?

> "All one, ever the same,
> Putting invention in a noted weed,
> That every word doth almost tell his name"?

There is no forced note. Mr. Hardy has evidently written his poems to please himself—the best of all reasons for writing—and it is impossible, after reading them, to read with pleasure the work of younger men whose admirable and ornamental verse has every quality of dexterity that his lacks, and none of that indefinable greatness that he undoubtedly possesses. He has knowledge of "those sequestered spots outside the gates of the world"; he has the knowledge with which he credits Angel Clare, of "the seasons in their moods, morning and evening, night and noon, in their temperaments, winds in their several dispositions, trees, waters, and clouds, shades and silence, *ignes fatui*, constellations, and the voices of inanimate things." To him, as to Wordsworth, nature becomes, as seen by man's intellect, "an ebbing and a flowing mind." He is in touch with the past, as with the present, and is familiar with forgotten years and the wealth of vanishing tradition.

Yet something is certainly missing. In many cases he has not sublimated his material into a single shapely whole; and, while his prose has innumerable passages out of which poetry is made, his verse sometimes deviates into prose. The poems are unequal. There is much delicate beauty in "The Dead Quire," and a homely charm in the country songs. The largeness of the evening earth upon the downland is drawn with exquisite propriety of phrase in the "Revisitation," where one of Time's laughing-stocks climbs alone at night, "with thoughts half-uttered,"

> "Up the lane I knew so well, the grey gaunt lane of Slyre,
> And at whiles behind me, far at sea, a sullen thunder muttered
> As I mounted high and higher.
>
> Round about me bulged the barrows
> As before, in antique silence—immemorial funeral piles—
> Where the sleek herds trampled daily the remains of flint-tipped arrows
> 'Mid the thyme and camomiles.
>
> Maybe, flustered by my presence
> Rose the peewits, just as all those years back, wailing soft and loud,
> And revealing their pale pinions like a fitful phosphorescence
> Up against the cope of cloud."

Very beautiful, too, is the clear outline of the summer night as it draws toward dawn, and

> "A red upedging sun, of glory chambered mortals view not,
> Was blazing on my eyes,
> From the Milton Woods to Dole-Hill,
> All the spacious landscape lighting, and around about my feet
> Flinging tall, thin tapering shadows from the meanest mound and molehill,
> And on trails the ewes had beat."

There are fine things in "She Hears the Storm," and its pendant, the "Farm-woman's Winter." But the inequality of the poems gives a certain impression of amateurishness—the amateurishness, of course, of an amateur of genius. It is not a question of makeshift work or careless technique, nor the avoidance of technical difficulties. In the Wessex Poems, in "My Cicely," the last line of twenty-nine verses rhymes with the word "me"; and in the "Sunday Morning Tragedy" in these new poems, the second and fourth lines of all the thirty-four verses are rhymed to the same rhyme sound—no mean feat; in both cases the use of this dominant sound has some of the haunting charm and none of the disadvantages of the refrain. It lies rather in the occasional *gaucheries* of his narrative poems, and in the inclusion among his nobler poems of such pieces as the meaningless "To a Rejected Member's Wife"; "1967" (with its aspiration toward the coming century:

> "I would only ask thereof
> That thy worm should be my worm, love")

And the young man's epigram upon life, where the thought has taken shape in doggerel:—

> "A senseless school where we must give
> Our lives, that we may learn to live!
> A dolt is he who memorizes
> Lessons that leave no room for prizes.

The short preface to the poems is interesting. Mr. Hardy repeats there his warning that the lyrics penned in the first person are to be regarded in the main as dramatic monologues; just as in the preface to the Poems of the Past and the Present he claims that "much is dramatic or impersonative, even where not explicitly so," and in that to the Wessex Poems, that his works are "always in a large degree dramatic or impersonative in conception, and this even where they are not obviously so." It seems to us to matter very little whether the poems represent imaginative or actual experience, so long as the writer has the power of looking at the world, or himself, through the

atmosphere of the poetic imagination. He also makes an apology for "some lack of concord in pieces written at widely severed dates, and in contrasting moods and circumstances"; but there is little need of the plea, as the book has an essential coherence as the expression of a powerful nature, of a mind so original that it is difficult to trace the influence of any other man's methods or thoughts upon him in poems which range in date between 1865 and 1909. There is, indeed, a resemblance between his narrative work and our ancient ballads; he has some of the directness and simplicity of the old writers, and has shown the genius and strength to grasp and exhibit the tragic passions in a way to challenge comparison with them. The clear and unembarrassed pathos of "The Sunday Morning Tragedy," the moving power of the Tramp-woman's story, can only be paralleled by that literature. He has, too, their felicity in dealing with the supernatural, their tendency to treat of those passions, crimes, and mistakes that have a kind of fatality in them.

We might have suspected that as some of these poems were written forty years ago, and have not been included in the Wessex Poems or the Poems of the Past and the Present, we have before us what tradesmen call a "second choice." But with the exception of the poems we have mentioned as not worthy of Mr. Hardy's genius, the book, as he very modestly claims, will take the reader forward rather than backward; and the later poems show a notable increase of power. The book is worth possessing, if only because it contains the moving music of that poem (in a minor key), which is an introduction to his country songs. (It would be difficult to find poems in anything but a minor key in Mr. Hardy's works).

Let me enjoy the earth no less
  Beause the all-enacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
  Had other aims than my delight.

About my path there flits a Fair,
  Who throws me not a word or sign;
I will find charm in her uncare,
  And laud those lips not meant for mine.

From manuscripts of wooing song,
  Inspired by scenes and souls unknown,
I'll pour out raptures that belong
  To others, as they were my own.

Perhaps some day, toward Paradise
  And all its blest—if such should be—
I shall lift glad, afar-off eyes,
  Though it contain no place for me.

THE PRESENT STATE OF POETRY.

The various schools of poetry at present in England have a common characteristic—conservatism. Each goes back to some tradition, and does very little more than carry it on. The writers who now pretend most to originality are generally the most imitative: snatching at the eccentricities of great but uneven models, they try, by exaggerating these, to produce the effect of novelty. The work of the best writers of verse of the younger generation consists chiefly of pleasant but slight variations on known themes. There is scarcely any development.

What is wanting in them, and in every writer of English verse at the present time, with the exception of the author of 'The Dynasts,' is energy of imagination. This, it may be argued, is a failing now common to men in every noble field of activity. The present writer does not think so. He, too, belongs to the younger generation, and, like many of his fellows, he accounts himself happy in that he is coming to the prime of life in one of the most exciting and hopeful eras in the history of the world. It seems to him—is it an illusion of fading youth?—that we are passing out of the wild, dazzling glare of the great *Aufklärung* of the latter part of the nineteenth century, into the large, steady light of a period of constructive activity in religion, science, philosophy, art, and letters. It is still too early to expect any general settlement of views in regard to the objects of fundamental importance; but these objects are becoming clearly defined. Clearness of vision is in itself a source of inspiration; and from it the best writers of the age derive their energy.

It is a fact of importance that these men are all prose writers. We have at least seven authors of recognized genius, and prose is their medium of expression. It is true that Mr. Thomas Hardy, the oldest and greatest of them, is the author of the most original essay in poetic drama since 'Faust'; but is he not essentially a prose writer who composes verse, as Milton would say, with his left hand? It is in his marvellous stage-directions that his extraordinary breadth and intensity of vision are displayed; his poetry is merely a comment on his prose. Nevertheless, it is fortunate for English literature that he has turned from prose, and is using the instrument of verse. Even as a poet, his virtues are greater than his defects. He imports from our prose into our poetry the qualities which our poetry now lacks—the sincerity, strength, range, and clarity of an enriched and disciplined imagination. With the exception of Francis Thompson and John Davidson, our poets of the younger generation seem to have lived entirely in the Palace of Art. Their impressions of life are taken at second-hand, and their ideas, derived from these impressions, are fanciful rather than imaginative. Our novelists, on the other hand, have been trained to use their own eyes. The general effect on our fiction of the realistic movement has been beneficent. It has hurt some weak minds; it has alarmed many tender consciences; it has enabled a few bad writers to acquire an unenviable reputation; but it has aroused in a considerable number of men a deeper sense of the realities of life, and this has in turn quickened their feelings, given their intellect a finer edge, and disciplined their imagination.

The Spectator Jan. 29th 1910

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.*

The Dynasts made it plain that in Mr. Hardy we had a true poet—though he lacked most of the conventional poetic attributes—by virtue of his gift of intense passion and his extraordinary imaginative scope. In *Time's Laughingstocks* he exposes himself to a harder test, for in short pieces his epic quality cannot appear, and his defects of ear and style are more obvious. But we are bound to say that the book has surprised us, for mingled with merits and defects which we had expected there are merits, shining merits, for which we were unprepared. For one thing, it is clear that Mr. Hardy is a master of the ballad. His narrative power helps him to this, but it could not give him that curious lyrical felicity, appearing as a kind of refrain, which adds just the touch of witchery. His ballads are grim enough, and he is obsessed by one type of subject, but they are wonderful poetry, not only in conception, but in execution. A verse from "A Trampwoman's Tragedy" shows this haunting quality, which is a thing quite distinct from the power and inevitableness of the narrative:—

"Lone inns we loved, my man and I,
My man and I;
'King's Stay,' 'Windwhistle' high and dry,
'The Horse' on Hintock Green,
The cosy house at Wynyard's Gap,
'The Hut' renowned on Bredy Knap,
And many another wayside tap
Where folk might sit unseen."

Or take this verse from "A Sunday Morning Tragedy":—

"There was a shepherd whom I knew,
A subtle man, alas for me:
I sought him all the pastures through,
Though better I had ceased to be."

Mr. Hardy has found the art of cunning repetition, of providing a kind of crooning undercurrent to the verse, which is the secret of the best ballads. He is not always as grim as in the instances we have quoted. There is much humour in "The Conformers" and "The Man He Killed," and "The Curate's Kindness" recalls the robust comedy of some of the novels. But good as the others are—and we would notice also "A Dream Question," which contains the poet's hard philosophy of human fate—it is in the lyrics that we are most surprised and delighted. A certain kind of country song we have always known that Mr. Hardy could write. In "The Farm-Woman's Winter," the delicious verses "At Casterbridge Fair," "The Dark-eyed Gentleman," "Rose-Ann," and especially "The Home-Coming," we get the quality of the novels put into verse of an idiomatic simplicity. But there are others, delicate porcelain things, melodious and unforgettable, which make us revise most of our judgments on Mr. Hardy as a poet. If verse is not his finest medium, it is one which none the less he can use like a master. We quote the perfect little poem "Let me enjoy," which might have been written by some seventeenth-century poet:—

"Let me enjoy the earth no less
Because the all-enacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
Had other aims than my delight.

About my path there flits a Fair,
Who throws me not a word or sign;
I will find charm in her uncare,
And laud those lips not meant for mine.

From manuscripts of moving song
Inspired by scenes and souls unknown,
I'll pour out raptures that belong
To others, as they were my own.

Perhaps some day, toward Paradise
And all its blest—if such should be—
I shall lift glad, afar-off eyes,
Though it contain no place for me."

* *Time's Laughingstocks, and other Verses.* By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan and Co. [4s. 6d. net.]

Melbourne Argus Jan. 8th 1910

I next pick up a volume bearing on its title-page the dear and honoured name of Thomas Hardy. It is called "Time's Laughing-Stocks" (London: Macmillan). Like Meredith, Mr. Hardy had won his laurels as a novelist long before the world knew him for a poet. That a poet he is, and a great poet, must be acknowledged by all who have read his tremendous Napoleonic drama, "The Dynasts"—the greatest of all his books, and the most secure of immortality. But nothing will induce me to believe that, great poet as he is, his lyrical poetry is a success. [illegible]

The Morning Post Dec. 9th 1909

"TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS."

TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS AND OTHER POEMS. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.

Mr. Thomas Hardy's new book, "Time's Laughingstocks," consists of not far short of a hundred poems, of which the first score are specially grouped under that title. It is almost unnecessary to say that there is hardly one poem to which the title does not perfectly apply, though the other sub-titles are "Love Lyrics," "A Set of Country Songs," and "Pieces Occasional and Various." Perhaps the only exceptions are "The Dark-eyed Gentleman," founded on a popular song—"And he came and he tied up my garter for me"; and a playful little piece on the blackbird in Wessex. In fact, these sub-divisions are quite arbitrary, since many of the lyrics are narrative, nearly all the narrative poems are in stanzas of lyrical quality, and love or the death of love is in all of them. The only other possible arrangement would be chronological, for a number of them are dated, the earliest belonging to nearly fifty years back, the latest to this year. We rejoice to see that the new are more than equal to the old in form, in substance, and in spirit. Many stanza forms are used; the rhymes are often elaborate; and assonance is sometimes used instead of rhyme.

This enduring ripeness and strength of Mr. Hardy's is not so surprising as at first sight when we consider that in his verse, at least as much as in his prose, his work is mainly intellectual and its emotion chiefly dramatic, if we accept the general emotion which pervades it all. There is no ecstasy or glory or magic for him to lose, save what is in the things themselves as distinct from his treatment of them. His austere, condensed, and fateful manner has lost nothing. His felicity in detail may be witnessed by phrases such as "blasts that besom the green" and "leaden concaves round her eyes," and by such a verse as

Dance; how a' would dance!
If a fiddlestring did but sound
She would fling out her coats, give a slanting glance,
And go round and round.

In at least one—a poem describing the home-coming of a bride to her husband's unknown, desolate house—there is a changing burden which is full if not of magic yet of a deep and strong suggestion of something which the intellect alone cannot handle—

Gruffly growled the wind on Toller downland broad and bare,
And lonesome was the house, and dark; and few came there.

The movement of that last line is characteristic. Another poem also of three perfect verses, "The Voice of the Thorn," though precise and severe, creates the personality of a tree comparable with Wordsworth's thorn, but quite different in its lack of expressed emotion.

As a rule Mr. Hardy's poems are the sum of their parts, and it would be easy to show what it is that produces their strong, calm effect. Seldom does anything creep in from Nature or the spirit of humanity to give his work a something not to be accounted for in what he actually says. His mood is that of "Tess" and "Two on a Tower," and the "President of the Immortals" is the dominant figure, if not always personally introduced. There is something plaintive, almost naïve and rustic, in Mr. Hardy's unvarying sadness—not mere despondency or melancholy or weakness, but the positive and hopeful quality of sadness; as there is something rustic in the question "And what's the good of it" following

"I have finished another year," said God.

There is, too, a religious quality, as of darkened lights and voices intoning. Sometimes the sadness might seem almost perverse, as in his poem of the pine-planters where, after the beautiful lines describing how the tree begins to sigh as soon as it stands upright, he interprets that sighing as

Grieving that never [? ever]
Kind Fate decreed
It could not ever
Remain a seed.

But that is only because it is more unmistakable here than usual that the sadness is definitely Mr. Hardy's (or Marty South's) and not that of life itself. It is true that he wishes the poems to be regarded as "dramatic monologues," yet the prevalent tone must be his, and so is the tone of many separate poems, such as that on a deathbed, which ends:

We see by littles now the deft achievement
Whereby she has escaped the wrongers all,
In view of which our momentary bereavement
Outshapes but small.

He cannot escape from his own slow muffled cadences, which at their liveliest suggest old people dancing an old dance, his reluctances and pauses; or from his sombre intellectual vocabulary. He makes no concession to the fact that he is writing verse except by using the word "swain" and by such construction as is

And nevermore sighted was even
A print of his shoe.

He is not in the least afraid of colloquial prose as in

I faltered: "Well . . . I did not think
You would test me [illegible]

He would abide with equanimity any [illegible] ultimate approval any too nice questioning as to whether his verses are poetry. Whether his poems are a few lines or several pages long, they are almost always stories, and it is to his repeated triumphs in representing a sequence of events and emotions and endowing them with a close colouring and form that we should point if this question were raised. Only poetry could produce with such economy and sureness the effects in "A Tramp Woman's Tragedy," "Sunday Morning Tragedy," "The Rejected Member's Wife," "On the Departure Platform," "The Dawn after the Dance," and "The Dead Quire." These are too long and closely knit to quote, but we will give an example from one of the early poems which are least dramatic in character:

The grey gaunt days dividing us in twain
Seemed hopeless hills my strength must faint to climb,
But they are gone; and now I would detain
The few clock-beats that part us; rein back Time
And live in close expectance never closed
In change for far expectance closed at last,
So harshly has expectance been imposed
On my long need while the slow blank months passed.
And knowing that what is now about to be
Will all have been in O, so short a space!
I read beyond it my despondency
When more dividing months shall take its place,
Thereby denying to this hour of grace
A full-up measure of felicity.

Here the form is a sonnet, and if it is in a sense a "moment's monument," the moment is full of years, and it is an implied narrative. This one is particularly useful as showing probably the author's own personality, and the tendency which controls the poems in which there are other actors. If this is so, two other poems may be quoted as showing the far from negatively pessimistic conclusions at which he has arrived—

Let me enjoy the earth no less
Because the all-enacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
Had other aims than my delight. . . .

and

Yet, would men look at true things,
And unilluded view things,
And count to fear undue things,
The real might mend the seeming,
Facts better their foredeeming,
And Life its disesteeming.

These passages are a necessary key to the poems and to Mr. Hardy's work as a whole.

Oxford Magazine Feb. 24th '10

Time's Laughingstocks. By THOMAS HARDY. (London: Macmillan & Co.) 4s. 6d.

~~*Rest and Vine.* By RACHEL ANNAND TAYLOR. (London: Elkin Mathews.) 5s.~~

The reviewer into whose hands these two books come simultaneously, may well fly back to Sidney and Shelley and Matthew Arnold and all the company of critics to recover some definition of poetry wide enough to embrace them both. They certainly do not mirror the same world, though perhaps they each express their own attitude towards it. They might well think each other colour-blind.

It is of course very hard to criticize Mr. Hardy as a poet. It is silly to yap at the greatest living English writer and to tell him that he ought to stick to his last. He must know that. He must have some good reason for not sticking to it. In *The Dynasts* one can see the reason: but in this volume it is not obvious. It is not that Mr. Hardy seriously fails in poetic technique. He uses one metre (the first poem in this volume is written in it) of which the rhythm is exasperatingly elusive: to read it aloud is like starting on a long walk with a lame companion. But much of his verse is formally good. What surprises one, indeed, is that many of these little poems are so ordinary both in form and in substance. He is at his best in Ballads. The refrain suits his irony: the spacious simplicity suits his landscape: the tale to be told accelerates his verse. But of the ballads that read well, every one would have read better in Mr. Hardy's hard clear prose. They are really short stories. He *ought* to have stuck to his last. One must say it, after all. For the truth is he has none of the emotion which demands utterance in poetry. He never looks on life with lilting enthusiasm: never makes sad things beautiful. Old age strikes him as a sordid, chilly misery: love is a disquieting desolating business:—

But—after love, what comes?
A scene that lours,
A few sad vacant hours,
And then, the curtain.

You cannot sing songs about such a dreary drama. You can write moving stories about it, or at least Mr. Hardy can: and he can write good, rather interesting verses which pale into bloodless insignificance beside Mrs. Annand Taylor's amazing exuberance. She has published before a volume of Poems, which attracted less attention than it deserved. In this second volume the merits and the defects of the first are exaggerated.

The Star (London) Dec. 18th 1909

Mr. Thomas Hardy's New Poems—"Time's Laughingstocks."

Mr. Thomas Hardy's fame as a novelist for a long time retarded the general recognition of his poetic genius; but "The Dynasts" broke down critical reluctance to believe that a great artist in one form of creative imagination could express himself in another. I freely admit that the roughness and ruggedness of Mr. Hardy's verse made me at first doubt its force; but "The Dynasts" gradually conquered me, and the third volume of that tremendous epic compelled me to cast away all merely technical scruples. Through the violently uncouth form a new vision of life arose, a vision as sternly austere in its scope and sweep as Dante's and Milton's. The imaginative grandeur of the vision transcended the vesture of words. If Mr. Hardy had not given his life to prose, his epic might have been clothed in classic robes. But perfect mastery over the poetic vehicle is not given to all poets, and it may be that we have gained more than we have lost. The axe is in some hands a fitter instrument than the file. Mr. Hardy's poetry is like rough-hewn sculpture. One may compare it to those masterpieces of Rodin wherein beauty is the bride of violence.

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To palates cloyed with decadent prettiness, the poetry of Mr. Hardy has a sharp and wholesome savor. It is tart and homely and racy. It is free from verbal affectations. It is bare of those faded ornaments which have made men sick of the very name of poetry. There is not a vestige of poetic diction, of what I may call poetic slang. The style is as honest as an apple, and it is the very expression of the poet. The whole man is in the turn of a phrase, in the magical use of a forgotten Saxon word, in the country smell of the place names. There is no poetry so English as this. It is far removed from the negative elegance of city verse. It is a bigger and broader thing than the poetry of literary coteries. Yet its rustic vigor is not trivial or contracted. The imagination at work is wide in its sweep, and it grapples with the deepest mysteries of human life. It eliminates the accidental and temporary shows of existence, and handles men and women stripped of social husks. For these reasons Mr. Hardy's new volume, "Time's Laughingstocks" (Macmillan), appears to me to be at the very top of his achievements. Of the poems it contains, some were written recently; others as long ago as 1866. Mr. Hardy hopes that as a whole they will "take the reader forward, if not far, rather than backward." They certainly do take him forward, and they take him farther than he may care to go, for Mr. Hardy is no respecter of conventions, and he lets the sword of his thought cut clean through our cobwebs.

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There are two great poems in the volume, "A Trampwoman's Tragedy" and "A Sunday Morning Tragedy." They are dramatic lyrics of a very high order. "A Trampwoman's Tragedy" has the piercing reality of Burns's "Jolly Beggars." Of course, Burns's poem is in the key of broad humor, whereas Mr. Hardy's poem is in the key of sombre tragedy; but they have one quality in common—absolutely truthful representation. The characters in "The Jolly Beggars" are outside the social machine. So are the characters in Mr. Hardy's poem. We see them as they are, without any distorting haze of local custom or prejudice. The tramp and her fancy-man and Jeering John and Mother Lee are human beings in moral and social insulation. They are outside the sanctions which control civilised persons. Yet the spiritual tragedy is all the more profound because it is based upon the laws of nature, and upon the laws of nature alone. Mr. Hardy here digs down to the very root of things. I will not try to tell the tale. It is all sheer art, and every word in the thirteen stanzas rings like a hammer-blow. There is only one weak inversion in the poem, and it is due to the need of a rhyme. It is curious that in nearly all Mr. Hardy's poems you find this surrender to the tyranny of rhyme. And yet no poet delights more openly in the most elaborate rhymes, in double and even in treble rhymes.

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The "Sunday Morning Tragedy" is a powerful study in the old ballad form. It is a masterpiece in that kind. There is no literary ostentation in its plain, clear simplicity. There is no artifice, no tinsel, no fine phrasing, no rhetoric. The dramatic propriety of the style is maintained without faltering from the first line to the last. It is the simple words of one syllable which give the poem its force. They are the very words which the mother would use, and their spontaneity is not destroyed by the metrical form. It is worth noting that the sincerity of the poem is largely due to the reiteration of the rhyme-word "me" in nearly every stanza. The recurrence of this word seems to rid the rhymes of their artificiality. It is a wonderful example of the power of simplification, for as one reads the poem one forgets that it is in rhyme, and the reiteration of the plaintive refrain seems to be the natural cry of the mother's tormented soul. And yet the reiterated rhyme is not a refrain, although it has all the effect of one. The poem with which this ballad ought to be compared is Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," and not Tennyson's "Rizpah," for, although "Rizpah" is fine, it is not fine in the same fashion. It has literary pathos in it rather than dramatic pathos. Coleridge is intensely dramatic, and so is Mr. Hardy. Let me quote these stanzas:—

Next Sunday came, with sweet church chimes,
In Pydel Vale, alas for me:
I went into her room betimes;
No more may such a Sunday be.

From church that noon the people walked
In twos and threes, alas for me,
Showed their new raiment—smiled and talked,
Though sackcloth-clad I longed to be.

Came to my door her lover's friends,
And cheerily cried, alas for me,
"Right glad are we he makes amends,
For never a sweeter bride can be."

My mouth dried, as 'twere scorched within,
Dried at their words, alas for me:
More and more neighbors crowded in,
O why should mothers ever be.

. . . . .

I kissed her colding face and hair,
I kissed her corpse—the bride to be!—
My punishment I cannot bear,
But pray God not to pity me.

And what was the mother's crime? She had tried to save her daughter from "the plight that is so scorned in Christendie," from the shame of motherhood unsanctioned by Law or Church:—

That night I watched the poppling brew,
With bended back and hand on knee;
I stirred it till the dawnlight grew,
And the wind whiffled wailfully.

The last line is wonderful in its tragical suggestion, and the use of the word "whiffled" is masterly. "Whimpered" would not do, or "murmured," or any of the outworn verbs so often employed by poets. Mr. Hardy, with the instinct of the true poet, has got the one word that tells. The word "colding" is another feat of imaginative magic. "I kissed her colding face and hair." That, surely, is great poetry. Magnificent, too, is the stark despair of the last lines in which the stricken mother rejects the pity of the Power that allows such mockery of human love.

* * *

It would be shallow to say that these poems, taken as a whole, are pessimistic. They are courageous, they are sincere, they are masculine, they are strong, for they look life in the face. They are sharp with irony, for life is ironic. They arraign convention and compromise. Not since Burns has any poet sung so fierce a challenge to hypocrisy and so noble a pæan of love and the joy of life. "The Dark-Eyed Gentleman" is as sanely joyous as any song of Burns. The "Country Songs" are exquisite things, fresh as the blackbird's notes. "The Dead Quire" is a Christmas morality which seems to me an imperishable masterpiece. It alone is an answer to those who do not discern the noble grandeur of the poet's vision of life. The "Love Lyrics" are drenched with a passionate tenderness. This, at any rate, is sure and clear: Mr. Hardy is a poet who holds that love is the heart of life, and who exalts womanhood far above all conventions and all creeds.

—James Douglas.

Pall Mall Gazette Jan. 13th 1910

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.* ×

× This review is by a woman doubtless

* "Time's Laughing-Stocks." By Thomas Hardy. (London: Macmillan and Co.) 4s. 6d. net.

Mr. Hardy still remains an enigma even to his keenest admirers. There has rarely been so complicated a temperament in English letters. He has been universally accepted as a master of fiction, and has maintained his place by a succession of masterpieces, which culminated in the blunder of "Jude the Obscure." It was a blunder, because it was a violation of definite canons of art which Mr. Hardy had hitherto respected; but it was a blunder which might have been retrieved. That, however, was not the novelist's resolution. Upon witnessing its reception Mr. Hardy abruptly turned his back on fiction, and allowed the force of his genius and temperament to flow in new channels. It is understood that poetry was his first love, as also it was Meredith's. In both cases we consider that the second thoughts were best. Meredith is far greater as a novelist than as a poet, and Mr. Hardy is incomparably finer; the melancholy side of this perplexing enigma is just that Mr. Hardy is not giving us now what we want from him. He is, in fine, working in a medium which does not suit him. The closer× we examine his poetic work, and the greater our experience of it, the plainer does this become. The base or essence of poetry is lyrical, and the two main characters of great poetry may be roughly determined as lyricism and pomp. The greatest examples of pomp are to be found in the epic writers, Homer, Virgil, Milton, and, of course, in Shakspeare. But the lyrical value of poetry is the most inevitable. Now Mr. Hardy lacks both qualities. He has not the dignity of epical narrative or dramatic emotion, nor has he the musical emotion of the lyric. Hence, we must repeat, he is working now in a medium which does not belong to him. There was one lyric, at any rate, in "The Dynasts"; there is more than one lyric in this volume, but not even two swallows or more make a summer. [But mem: The Burial of Sir John Moore]

× Journ. al[?]se for more closely.

We must, however, receive our gifts without unduly complaining. And first we cull what we consider Mr. Hardy's most perfect lyric:—

Rain on the windows, creaking doors,
With blasts that besom the green,
And I am here, and you are there,
And a hundred miles between!

O were it but the weather, Dear,
O were it but the miles,
That make our sum of severance,
There might be room for smiles.

But that thwart thing betwixt us twain,
Which hides, yet reappears,
Is more than distance, Dear, or rain,
And longer than the years!

This could hardly be bettered. Generally his lyrics lean towards the Heinesque, and sometimes almost too obviously so, as in the close of that curious poem "Four Footprints," with its final and, perhaps intentionally, banal line:—

For they have resumed their honeymoon tour.

The poem entitled "The Husband's View" is puzzling. (!) Is it to be regarded as grim humour? If so, Mr. Hardy has outsailed the cynical (and sentimental) German. The only other alternative is to banish definitely the idea of humour, and regard it as a singularly weak exposition of a singular philosophy. It is probable that the solution is to be found in Mr. Hardy's ingrained pessimism. That is the note of all these poems. It is a bitter, unrelieved pessimism, for which there is no remedy, from which there is no refuge. We are inclined to account for efforts which a sense of humour should have prohibited by the dominance of this evil spirit. We have found one gleam of humour (and it is grim humour at that) in a bunch of country poems, which might very well have lent themselves to lighter treatment. It is related to the "Curate's Kindness." The curate had arranged for an old couple to go into the workhouse, and succeeded in getting the guardians to allow them to remain unparted. Alas! the husband ends his recital—

I thought they'd be strangers aroun' me,
But she's to be there!
Let me jump out o' waggon and go back and drown me
At Pummery or Ten-Hatches Weir.

Some of the lines and phrasings and metres are studies in infelicity. "In the Crypted Way" might be mistaken for Browning's work, but is more rhythmical than his wont. The metre of "The Revisitation" is halting and unhappy, and generally his experiments in metre are not successful. Very often he rises to the height of a fine passage, but one feels that it is the passage of a fine prose stylist rather than of a poet. Here peers out the author of that amazing description of Egdon Heath with more natural music in it than in all these pages.

Mr. Hardy's despair finds its climax in two poems which are impressive almost by reason of their stiffness and lack of melody. One is called "New Year's Eve" and the other "The Unborn." It would be impossible to convey the terrible philosophy embodied in these verses except by integral quotation, which is impracticable here. But the drift is rendered in two stanzas:—

"I have finished another year," said God,
"In grey, green, white and brown;
I have strewn the leaf upon the sod,
Sealed up the worm within the clod,
And let the last sun down."

"And what's the good of it?" I said.
"What reasons made you call
From formless void this earth we tread,
When nine-and-ninety can be read
Why naught should be at all?"

The note of these lines is the note of these poems. They are a cry of despair, of impotence, even of wrath. For Mr. Hardy there is no answer to his question, and thus the melancholy list of his art is explicable and intelligible. It is only in some of the country verses and in an occasional love lyric that one can get away from his [illegible] and his hopelessness.

The Adelaide Register
Jan. 8th 1910

A NOVELIST'S POETRY.

"Time's Laughingstocks, and other poems," by Thomas Hardy; Macmillan and Co., London.—It is well to have an established reputation, but not well, surely, to take liberties with it. What chance would a young and unknown writer have if he offered the public a set of verses beginning thus:—

We kissed at the barrier; and, passing through,
She left me, and moment by moment got
Smaller and smaller, until to my view
She was but a spot.

Mr. Hardy, who has latterly—as a novelist—been placed on one pinnacle with George Meredith by the most influential critics, has long taken himself seriously as a poet. "The Dynasts," the Napoleonic drama of 19 acts and 130 scenes, is a vast and almost chaotic achievement of the kind which receives tremendous praise from reviewers and afterwards remains almost unread. The poems now gathered together have a range of about 40 years. They are mostly careful and correct fancies such as a great prose writer will achieve when he turns to verse; the thing told is of more account than the manner of telling it. Browning is the master chiefly followed, although one anecdote about a garter is pure Burns. This poet can attempt to make "teacher" rhyme with "creature." He can be unintentionally comic, as where a philosophic lover, looking a century ahead, "would only ask thereof That thy worm should be my worm, Love!" He can be prosy:—

In I went. But how unfitted was this Rosalind!
a mammet quite to me, in memories nurst,
And with chilling disappointment soon I sought
the street I had quitted, to re-ponder on the first.

The graceful lines on Meredith deserve quotation in full:—

C. M., 1828-1909.

Forty years back, when much had place
That since has perished out of mind,
I heard that voice and saw that face.

He spoke as one afoot will wind
A morning horn ere men awake;
His note was trenchant, turning kind.

He was of those whose wit can shake
And riddle to the very core
The counterfeits that Time will break.

Of late, when we two met once more,
The luminous countenance and rare
Shone just as forty years before.

So that, when now all tongues declare
His shape unseen by his green hill,
I scarce believe he sits not there.

No matter. Further and further still
Through the world's vaporous vitiate air
His words wing on—as live words will.

A strange blemish on the book is its moral tone, which is unaccountably low. Passion may be tolerated in a poet, but the stale dregs of it are not welcome. This applies chiefly to the anecdotal series dealing with "Wessex"—though "Panthera," the most ambitious poem in the volume, is a gloss on the New Testament; and it would be a bold reviewer who should put down in plain prose the main idea of that story! In Hardy's own country, as he represents it, the moral sense is apparently absent. An old rogue muses on his deathbed over seven maidens he has betrayed, and all absolve him handsomely:—"O, the time was fair," "Small harm did you," "I feel no hostility," and so on. An unmarried mother calmly tells the congregation at the christening that her man prefers "to be together just now and then" rather than to be "chained and doomed for life, slovening as vulgar man and wife." A person with the outward semblance of a decent citizen says to his sweetheart—"Yes, we'll wed," but makes it clear that he thinks it a pity to do so:—

When down to dust we glide,
Men will not say askance,
As now, "How all the countryside
Rings with their mad romance!"
But, as they graveward glance,
Remark "In them we lose
A worthy pair who helped advance
Sound parish views."

A wife who finds out her husband in shameless infidelity says—"Conscience-capped, I saw myself the snarer, them the trapped." Conversely, a husband takes it waggishly—"What with our serious need of youths for soldiering," and "I am not a particular man." Another complacent husband, having been offered handsome terms, remarks cheerfully, "Since comfort and good cheer so readily are bought, He's welcome to thee, dear." In one word, woman's fall comes to pass (as on page 75) "inevitably." The County of Dorset has a serious cause of quarrel with Mr. Hardy.

Manchester Guardian
Dec. 14th 1909

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.

TIME'S LAUGHING-STOCKS. By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan and Co. Pp. x. 208. 4s. 6d. net.

It is a pleasure to find that Mr. Hardy has not lost or smothered his more lyrical self in the nobilities of epic, that he can come back from "The Dynasts" to his intimate Wessex with his perception of its little, significant concerns clear as ever and his handling as fresh and firm. Many of the verses here were written long—forty years and more—ago, so that this comparison of new and old is immediate; but the whole volume is so consistent, so much of a piece, that only the appended dates indicate it, and they show the groundlessness of the little doubts we may have started. Yet somehow the terms "pleasure" and "lyrical," especially in conjunction, may mislead, suggesting joy and a buoyant beauty, and these are scarcely Mr. Hardy's. One's pleasure is in his skill and mastery, as in the work of a great surgeon or general; the sure strokes, the swift craft, the art for art's sake that raises so common things to their highest power—these kindle admiration and stimulate the imagination to a legitimate activity. In form and manner these verses are lyrics, but they are what Browning so happily called dramatic lyrics, with the whole world of difference between incorrigible optimism and a fatalism that sees in the waywardness of common men and women the symbol of a deeper tragedy, "the disease of feeling." This is no place lightly and easily to define the mission or propound the faith of Mr. Hardy—the only point we would make here is that, though his speech be trenchant and mordant and Wessex life a pitiful tangle, he is no cynic.

Let me enjoy the earth no less
Because the all-enacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
Had other aims than my delight.

. . . .

From manuscripts of moving song
Inspired by scenes and souls unknown
I'll pour out raptures that belong
To others, as they were my own.

Perhaps some day, toward Paradise
And all its blest—if such should be—
I shall lift glad, afar-off eyes,
Though it contain no place for me.

Needless to say, there is no wringing of hands, no self-pitying tears, no penny-reading sentimentalism in Mr. Hardy's grey verse. A beneficent deity may be for him a doubtful quantity, life is not bitter ashes,

Life may be sad past saying,
Its green for ever greying,
Its faiths to dust decaying;

. . . .

Yet, would men look at true things,
And unilluded view things,
And count to bear undue things,

The real might mend the seeming,
Facts better their foredeeming,
And Life its disesteeming.

And these puny villagers, elaborating some tremendous confusion, are very real, pitiful, impotent human beings. Time may laugh at them, but Mr. Hardy cannot; they are his schoolmates in this

senseless school, where we must give
Our lives that we may learn to live.

For them rebuke and ridicule are impertinent, irrelevant. Here in "A Tramp-woman's Tragedy," "Sunday Morning Tragedy," "The Flirt's Tragedy," "The Vamparine Fair"—to name only four of the ballads that are too complete to bear partial quotation—the ironies of passion and folly

(Too fragrant was Life's early bloom,
Too tart the fruit it brought)

are set out, without comment or moralising adornment, but with a pity that is too tender and a sincerity that is too strong for cynicism.

We might attempt to saddle Mr. Hardy with some such trite motto as "Not man for the Sabbath" and cite his delightful ironic verses

We shall not go in stealth
To rendezvous unknown,
But friends will ask me of your health,
And you about my own.
When we abide alone,
No leapings each to each,
But syllables in frigid tone
Of household speech.

When down to dust we glide
Men will not say askance,
As now, "How all the countryside
Rings with their mad romance!"
But as they graveward glance
Remark: "In them we lose
A worthy pair, who helped advance
Sound parish views."

Liverpool Post
Dec 15. 1909

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

Sweeping statements are always dangerous, but we think it will be safe to say that Mr. Thomas Hardy's new volume of poems, "Time's Laughing-Stocks" (Macmillan), is the most noteworthy book of the year. No book published for many a day bears, as this one does, that indefinable quality of greatness which marks all high literary work. When we remember that, after all, prose is more essentially Mr. Hardy's medium, the present volume becomes in our eyes a literary performance of the very highest kind. The volume is the work of a man who has left youth and all its enthusiasms far behind, and who is the last of the band who made the greatness of the Victorian age. Over all the work of Mr. Hardy there is the sense of a strong, vast thought, and in these new poems, many of which were written in the author's young days, this quality is not lacking. Mr. Hardy's power of suggestion is of the highest, and several of the poems in the present volume owe much of their strength and force to this art. Take, for example, "Wagtail and Baby," a short poem, which we quote in full:—

A baby watched a ford, whereto
A wagtail came for drinking;
A blaring bull went wading through,
The wagtail showed no shrinking.

A perfect gentleman then neared;
The wagtail in a winking,
With terror rose and disappeared;
The baby fell a-thinking.

Mr. William Watson, who really is our best sonnet-maker, will have to look to his laurels, for in this new volume of Mr. Hardy's is one of which, though not in strict form, no poet need be ashamed. It is called "The Minute Before Meeting."

The grey, gaunt days dividing us in twain
Seemed hopeless hills my faith must faint to climb.
But they are gone; and now I would detain
The few clock-beats that part us—rein back Time,
And live in close expectance never closed
In change for far expectance closed at last,
So harshly has expectance been imposed
On my long need while these slow blank months passed.
And knowing that which is now about to be
Will all have been in O, so short a space!
I read beyond it my despondency
When more dividing months shall take its place,
Thereby denying to this hour of grace
A full-up measure of felicity.

One can see, and it is not in the least to Mr. Hardy's discredit, the impression Shakespeare's sonnets have left upon him. But however much the great master may have influenced the writing of this piece, it remains among the finest in this book. Each poem in this volume shows how sincere Mr. Hardy is in all he writes, and how wide his view of life. There is none of that sense of crabbed confinement which marks so much of the ephemeral literature of our day, but in "Time's Laughing-Stocks," as in Mr. Hardy's novels, there is the feeling of a great sincerity—the hallmark of all high literary work—work that will endure when time has done his sifting. Of the poems in the first part of the book which have suggested the striking title, the best is "A Sunday Morning Tragedy," in which Mr. Hardy has rhymed the second and fourth lines of all the thirty-four verses to the word "me." But this accomplishment does not in any way pall upon the reader, as would be the case if the work had been done by a less practised hand. But the finest poem in the book is unquestionably "A Tramp Woman's Tragedy."

. . . .

No one but the great writer of Wessex could have penned these verses. They are true Hardy. We have left ourselves no space to quote further, but there are many other poems, especially in the latter part of the book, which we should like to give. In conclusion, we can only say that in "Time's Laughing-Stocks" will be found many poems which will enrich our language and add still further to the already great reputation of Mr. Hardy.

Aberdeen Free Press
Jan 3. 1910

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.

Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses. By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan and Co. 4s 6d net.

One cannot help comparing this book with a recent volume of poems by another great novelist of our time. Meredith was, like Hardy, a rebel against convention; [illegible] the resemblance ends. The spirit of their poetry, as revealed in these volumes, is radically different. Meredith's attitude is that of the man who believes in the ultimate triumph of the right, [illegible] to hearten men for the struggle against weakness and wrong. Hardy's attitude is that of one who has been disillusioned. [illegible] one of the poems in this collection [illegible] the terrible lines—

They rate the world as a gruesome place,
Where fair looks fade to a skull's grimace. [illegible]

These words literally express [illegible] Hardy's point of view. His imagination is filled with the tragedy of death, of [illegible] beauty, of false devotion, and upon these notes he dwells insistently. The very first piece, "The Revisitation"—a powerful [illegible]—strikes at once the note of gloom. It is a story of two lovers, who after twenty [illegible] met one summer night at the old trysting place.

"It is just as ere we parted!" [illegible]
Said she, brimming high with joy. "And when, then, came you here, and why?"
"Dear, I could not sleep for thinking of our trystings when twin-hearted."
She responded, "Nor could I."

They were weary, and as they sat side by side, they dozed, until

"A red upedging sun, of glory [illegible] mortals view not,
Was blazing on my eyes."

In the daylight he saw the sad effects of "time's transforming chisel" upon his companion. She too awoke, and, noticing his involuntary movement of dismay, [illegible]—

"Yes: that movement was a warning
Of the worth of man's devotion! Yes, sir, I am old," said she,
"And the thing which should increase love turns it quickly into scorning—
And your neat-kept heart from me!" [illegible]

"The Tramp-woman's Tragedy" is a moving story, the metre of which adds considerably to the pathos. The following stanza will suggest the tale—

Now as we trudged—O deadly day,
O deadly day!—
I teased my fancy-man in play
And wanton idleness.
I walked alongside jeering John,
I laid his hand my waist upon;
I would not bend my glances on
My lover's dark distress.

"The Flirt's Tragedy" is even more tragical, and, but for the beauty of its execution, would be intolerable. This poem and others suggest the weird plaintiveness of the old ballad.

The series of Love Lyrics which Mr Hardy has included in this collection are in perfect harmony with the pieces which have given the title to the volume. The subject of the poems is love—transient, [illegible], and dishonourable. It is a love that fades with the passing of youth and beauty. [illegible]

[illegible]
And [illegible]
Are they the ones we loved in years agone,
And courted here?

The idea expressed in these lines constantly recurs. It is not a beautiful idea, and though it expresses an aspect of truth, it is only one, and not the most valuable aspect. It ignores the subtle and tender effect of mere companionship—not to speak of affection—upon the relations of men and women. The sentiment of a poem like, say, "John Anderson, my Jo," is far truer to life than some realists would seem to admit. It is noticeable that Mr Hardy's pre-occupation with the tragic side of love is not a passing phase in his history. Some of the gloomiest and most realistic of the poems were written between 1866 and [illegible].

The power of this volume is undeniable. Every poem is vivid, real, sincere, and bears the stamp of individuality. In his [illegible] Mr Hardy is often more careless than an inferior poet, but he is always [illegible] always clear. His lines on [illegible] we believe, already been quoted [illegible] columns, but they will bear [illegible] piece is dated April, [illegible] heading the sentence from [illegible] wisdom and knowledge shall be the [illegible] of thy times." The lines [illegible]

I looked and thought, "All is [illegible]
To [illegible]
Till a [illegible]
[illegible]

Daily Chronicle Dec 7th 1909

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

TIME'S LAUGHING-STOCKS AND OTHER VERSES, by Thomas Hardy. London, Macmillan, 4s. 6d. net.

By Edward Thomas.

It would be interesting to learn how a great prose writer regards his verse. He will have a tenderness for it as for the fairer and perhaps the elder child; but in what frame of mind does he who can say so much in prose, and denies himself no subject or mood in it, turn to verse? Is it an instinct for finality in form, a need of limitation and strict obedience to rule, or a desire to express but not to explain, or is it partly for the sake of the royalty of the robes and the great tradition? Mr. Hardy is silent. That he cares much for the forms of verse is clear from the number which he uses, and there is one at least which he has made distinctively his own, that of the poem on "One We Knew (M.H. 1772-1857)":

She told us how they used to form for the
  country dances—
"The Triumph," "The New-rigged Ship"—
To the light of the guttering wax in the
  panelled manses,
And in cots to the blink of a dip.

And yet, though he indulges in many varieties of rhyme and stanza form, it is hard to believe that it is for any sensuous quality. For they have almost none, and we wonder what subtle reason he had for using a lyric stanza like the following for a narrative full of conversation:

We moved with pensive paces,
  I and he,
And bent our faded faces
  Wistfully,
For something troubled him and troubled
  me.

Un-Sonnet Like.

There are sonnets in the book, but so unlike sonnets in spirit that many will read them without observing that they have this form. Often it might be thought that he dresses his thoughts in these noble and famous garments in a mood of solemn mockery. That, whether its intention or not, is its effect. He laughs at the external beauty of verse by making it clothe a corpse, a withered old man, or a woman of faded youth. The utmost positive effect of the verse is to give brevity and solemnity. The poems do not materially differ from his stories except that they are shorter than anything he has done in prose, and that they gain a greater solemnity from their more uniform colouring, their greater simplicity and lack of explanations.

Many of the poems are narrative. Even when called lyrical they suggest a chain of events. They are full of misunderstandings, forebodings, memories, endings, questionings. These the subjects, and they are the atmosphere of the book, from which there is no escape. Other poetry allows a great richness and diversity of interpretation; Mr. Hardy's allows none. He will not give his readers a moment's liberty. He gives them not only actions and characters, but their results; not only their results, but what is to be thought of them. He may not give us these things in so many words, but, if not, he does so by unmistakable implication. We cannot think of any other poetry so tyrannous; and this in part makes us restive under the conventional form, which adds a grotesqueness by means of the necessary inversion and other poetic license to the philosophic prose diction.

Across the Years.

The work belongs to very different periods, but chiefly to an early one, about 1866, and to a late one, ending in the present year with a fine poem on George Meredith. There is little difference in character, and the following might belong to 1907 instead of to 1867. It is called "1967":

In five-score summers! All new eyes,
New minds, new modes, new fools, new wise;
New woes to weep, new joys to prize;
With nothing left of me and you
In that live century's living view
Beyond a pinch of dust or two;
A century which, if not sublime,
Will show, I doubt not, at its prime,
A scope above this blinkered time.
—Yet what to me how far above?
For I would only ask thereof
That thy worm should be my worm, Love!

The one difference is that the later method is less fluent, more rich and dramatic, and the sonnets, for example, belong to the earlier period.

The obvious quality to point to in all the poems is the sense of the misery and fraudulence of life. The men and women have been happy and are not, and the happiness is now nothing; or they are or ought to be happy, but there is an inexplicable sigh; or they compare their own day unfavourably to an older. The poems abound in phrases such as—

Before the birth of consciousness,
  When all went well—

or—

Yet, Dear, though one may sigh,
  Raking up leaves,
New leaves will dance on high—
  Earth never grieves!—
Will not, when missed am I
  Raking up leaves—

or—

But she will no more stand
  In the sunshine there,
With that wave of her white-gloved hand,
  And that chestnut hair—

or—

O friend, nought happens twice thus, why,
  I cannot tell!

Of "Sweet Sincerity."

The book contains ninety-nine reasons for not living. Yet it is not a book of despair. It is a book of sincerity, "sweet sincerity," and to a poem of that name there is a memorable conclusion. It is dated 1899:

Yet, would men look at true things,
And unilluded view things,
And count to bear undue things,
The real might mend the seeming,
Facts better their foredeeming,
And life its disesteeming.

He does not believe that life is worth living as these men and women lived, even if they did, and he gives us little chance of believing so. But he thinks it is to be altered. He has a poem on a christening, where a lovely child makes the congregation smile with pleasure—while the unmarried mother weeps on the gallery stair:

I am the baby's mother;
  This gem of the race
The decent fain would smother,
  And for my deep disgrace
I am bidden to leave the place.

Bitter as the poem is there is hope in it. For it demands, at least, if it does not foresee, a time when values and judgments will be truer than they are, when we of our day shall be held as callous as those who hung men for sheep-stealing. Mr. Hardy looks at things as they are, and what is still more notable he does not adopt the genial consolation that they might be worse, that in spite of them many are happy, and that the unhappy live on and will not die. His worst tragedies are due as much to transient and alterable custom as to the nature of things. He sees this, and he makes us see it. The moan of his verse rouses an echo that is as brave as a trumpet.

The Daily Telegraph Dec. 8th 1909

TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS.

(MACMILLAN. 4s 6d net.)

In the absence of those novels of his which represent some of the highest fictional achievements of our time, we must perforce be content with Mr. Thomas Hardy's essays in poetry. No one has any business to quarrel with the form which an artist chooses for exhibiting the spirit that is within him, and if Mr. Hardy finds in verse-composition more direct personal and lyrical opportunities than he possessed in the writing of romances, it is an idle and ungracious act to complain. That magnificently sombre dramatic poem in three volumes, which is called "The Dynasts"—a drama of the Napoleonic wars—is so fine a thing that we can only register a passing regret that in this case, as in others besides, the artist seems unaware of the best form in which to cast his thoughts. For "The Dynasts" is a drama which is no drama; it is much more akin to an imaginative and rhetorical exercise of the mind, such as Carlyle gave us in his "French Revolution." In the present volume, "Time's Laughingstocks," we have a collection of lighter pieces, divided into more or less dramatic episodes, love lyrics, and country songs. They are by no means all of the same excellence; indeed, with regard to some of them it would be hardly unjust to say that they are divided by an extremely narrow margin from ordinary prose. Mr. Hardy does not clothe himself in poetic vesture; he clearly does not believe in a poetic diction. He will use ugly, abstract words, if they seem the most appropriate for his purpose, without any regard for the effect upon our ear. Take the following, for instance. The poet is describing how he spends a night in "the old home," and addresses his ancestors:

They come and seat them around in their mouldy
  places,
Now and then bending towards me a glance of
  wistfulness,
A strange upbraiding smile upon all their faces,
  And in the bearing of each a passive tristfulness.
"Do you uphold me, lingering and languishing here,
  A pale late plant of your once strong stock?" I
  say to them;
"A thinker of crooked thoughts upon Life in the
  sere,
  And on That which consigns men to night after
  showing the day to them?"

Or take this, in which we have a comment upon a dead woman:

We see by littles now the deft achievement
  Whereby she has escaped the Wrongers all,
In view of which our momentary bereavement
  Outshapes but small.

If these lines were printed straightforwardly, like prose, should we have discovered that they were originally written as poetry?

A PESSIMIST.

But in criticisms like these we are really missing the main point. For Mr. Hardy is assuredly not a poet in the sense in which Milton defined the essence of the poet. He is, above all, a thinker, occupied with much the same problems as those which beset Robert Browning—the necessity of forcing into verse difficult and metaphysical thoughts. But there is one great difference. Browning, though he knew better than most the tragedy of life, and the aimlessness of human effort, was a magnificent and sturdy optimist. Mr. Hardy is a pessimist; so obstinate a pessimist that the thoughts which Nature gives him, the ordinary impressions he derives from his view of the world and of human life, are always draped in black. A mother comes to visit her child, just at the time when the child has herself given birth to another child. Does the mother wish her grandchild well? Does she breathe some hopes or aspirations of happiness? Not a bit of it:

Source of ecstatic hopes and fears
  And innocent maternal vanity,
Your fond exploit but shapes for tears
  New thoroughfares in sad humanity.

Or the poet watches the blaze of the Christmas fire, and all the geniality of the festive season, and his thoughts at once revert to a wretched thrush outside, toiling to reach a rotting berry. Once more, there is a poem here called "John and Jane," which is very significant. John and Jane are a happy pair of lovers, who marry and are content, and look upon their child as the culmination of their connubial bliss:

They see as a palace their cottage-place,
Containing a pearl of the human race,
A hero, maybe, hereafter styled,
  Do John and Jane with a baby-child.

But, now, mark the sequel:

They rate the world as a gruesome place,
Where fair looks fade to a skull's grimace—
As a pilgrimage they would fain get done—
  Do John and Jane with their worthless son.

Mr. Hardy, apparently, cannot help looking at things in this fashion. Happiness reminds him of the misery that is elsewhere. The ecstasy of lovers tells him how melancholy is like to be their future domestic life. Even the women he draws are not happy, good creatures—good because they are happy, happy because they are good. On the contrary, they are all weak, passionate, sinning creatures, beings who go down before temptation at once, who do evil and repent, and are miserable. It is a very sad world that Mr. Hardy sees. And he insists on seeing only the worst of it. It is a question of temperament, no doubt; and, of course, nothing is sillier than a foolish optimism which considers that this is the best of possible universes. But if there is no joy in existence, if there is no pleasure to be gained from the beauty of the world, if there is no contentment to be acquired from the fact that men and women are always better than they are supposed to be, and that little unknown acts of kindness and sweetness are done every day, and wonderful deeds of self-sacrifice, which make humanity only a little lower than the angels—then I, for one, see no reason why any human being should stay in a world so alien from the best human instincts.

THE RIDDLE OF LIFE.

We must take Mr. Hardy as we find him; and, at all events, his scheme is perfectly consistent, and, in a sense, philosophic. We see the theology in a curious poem, which he calls "A Dream Question." The poet asks the Lord whether it can possibly be true that He is at once omnipotent, and yet orders pain. And the Deity is supposed to make reply, "Save me from my friends. I work in my own fashion. There may be such a thing as a fourth dimension, and perhaps some such mystery resides within the ethic of God's will." In a blacker mood, Mr. Hardy will not even suggest this possible solution of the great insoluble problem. In a poem called "New Year's Eve," a poem of much beauty, the same question is asked; and there the suggestion is that the ultimate Power that rules this universe goes on in blind fashion. Having made Consciousness, He knows not why, He refuses to accept the criticisms of that Consciousness:

Then he: "My labours—logicless—
  You may explain; not I:
Sense-sealed I have wrought, without a guess
That I evolved a Consciousness
  To ask for reasons why.

"Strange that ephemeral creatures who
  By my own ordering are,
Should see the shortness of my view,
Use ethic tests I never knew,
  Or made provision for!"

He sank to raptness as of yore,
  And opening New Year's Day,
Wove it by rote as theretofore,
And went on working evermore
  In his unweeting way.

The philosophy of it all is clear. It is based on the metaphysic of Schopenhauer, or, further back, on the scheme of Buddha. Man has to go through a series of painful reincarnations; and the only thing to be hoped for, the only object of effort, is so to negate the power of will that no longer shall it desire fresh incarnation and fresh life, but shall sink into a kind of painless Nirvana. In "Before Life and After" there is a cri de cœur:

Ere nescience shall be reaffirmed
  How long, how long?

When, in other words, shall we get back to the stage of unconsciousness when all thought and desire shall have waned, and Will itself be destroyed, and what Lucretius called "Passionless bride, divine tranquillity," shall have been spread as a comforting and soothing atmosphere all round us? Let us, indeed, drink the waters of Lethe and forget.

TRAGIC SONG.

It is impossible not to lay stress on these aspects of Mr. Hardy's muse, for they stare one in the face, and the spirit of them colours all his thoughts. But it is also right to add that in this volume are included pieces of great power, which readers will look at again and again. Such are "A Reminiscence," in which a man sees in the cruel light of day the aging features of the woman he loved; "Panthera," a curious and arresting story; "A Sunday Morning Tragedy," almost too dreadful to read; "The Tramp-woman's Tragedy," strongly melodramatic; and "The Curate's Kindness," which is perhaps the one example of Mr. Hardy's humour. These pieces are not conspicuously poetical, but they are often dramatic, full of that quality which appears in Browning's "Dramatic Romances," and, now and again, they have a sombre beauty of their own. But ruggedness and sincerity and power are their chief characteristics, for they all bear the impress of a masterful personality—the influence of a man who suffers and despairs and weaves his gloomy thoughts in tragic song.

Daily Mail Dec. 18th 1909

OUR greatest living novelist, beyond dispute, Mr. Thomas Hardy, has issued a volume of poems, in every piece of which the great novelist is announced. Whether the poet is also announced is another question—a question much discussed. It was under dispute not long since in an Oxford Common Room, and after the expression of many views the supreme authority on literature, and especially poetry, was asked for his verdict. He thought, and answered in an idiom new to his hearers: "I like my poetry good," he said; "and if I cannot get it good, I like it rum!"

These poems will seem to most readers not so much "rum" as glum.

The Glasgow Herald

Dec 15th 1909

THOMAS HARDY, POET.

TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS. By Thomas Hardy. 4s 6d net. (London: Macmillan and Co.)

The more we consider what poetry is, the more convinced we shall become that some vision of life is essential, some dream of beauty, or capacity for emotion suggesting beauty, and that absolute conviction must be stamped on the poet's every utterance. Earnestness, with any poetic gift at all, is the best safeguard of style, and the bulk of our poets fail, not through want of art, but through lack of message, while, for that very reason, there are scores of unconsidered verse-writers who can and do write one memorable poem. It is just because Mr Hardy has the vision, the emotion, and the conviction that his book stands out markedly from much of the work we have recently had to deal with. He has looked out on Wessex; under his eyes the lives of its men and women have been lived, and the procession of the generations has passed for many years; he has viewed this life steadily, and what he has seen he has recorded, even as Burns did. It has left him with few illusions. At times it seems a purely Pagan world, at times it would seem as if "Vanity" must be written across all human action, and as if the chambers of life, once lit and warm, were in these latter days dark and fireless. Love grows pale and faith dies.

Hardy's Pessimism.

Now, pessimism always seems more profound than optimism, and Ecclesiastes packed with a riper wisdom than the Psalms; yet if the greyness of a disillusioned paganism were all that Mr Hardy had to reveal, we doubt if his work would have so deeply impressed us. But even here the poet has a word to say:—

> Yet, would men look at true things,
> And unilluded view things,
> And count to bear undue things,
>
> The real might mend the seeming,
> Facts better their foredeeming,
> And Life its disesteeming.

In some memorial lines on George Meredith his chief praise is—

> That he riddled through and through
> The counterfeits that Time will break.

And some such purpose is his own. The result on his art is apparent. He writes with a directness that none of our poets except Mr Kipling possesses, and with a profoundness and absence of rhetorical appeal unknown to any. He forces no note; though we may quarrel with his choice of subject, his point of view, we cannot with his sincerity of treatment. We do not know any living poet who could have done anything at all with "The Trampwoman's Tragedy" and the "Sunday Morning Tragedy," the murder of a supposed rival by a jealous paramour and a fatal attempt to procure abortion; yet the poet has made them profoundly moving, not in any sentimental way, but by bringing before us the deeper tragedy of heart which may lie at the back of a vulgar crime. Take these concluding verses of the first. The man has been hanged for his crime, and the woman tells us that her child has been born dead. Then

> In the night as I lay weak,
> As I lay weak,
> The leaves a-falling on my cheek,
> The red moon low inclined—
> The ghost of him I'd die to kiss
> Rose up and said: "Ah, tell me this!
> Was the child mine, or was it his?
> Speak, that I rest may find.
>
> O doubt not that I told him then,
> I told him then,
> That I had kept me from all men
> Since we joined lips and swore.
> Whereat he smiled, and thinned away
> As the wind stirred to call up day . . .
> —'Tis past! And here alone I stray
> Haunting the Western Moor.

Pity and Wonder.

It is all as simple as "Lucy Gray." With the same directness he dwells on the puzzles of life, of love, of God, with the mild irony of one who can give no solution, but with more pity. His curious wonderment about war in "The Man he Killed" becomes thus far more effective than a bitter tirade. Death is no more strange than birth. The new born are hurried into existence by the all-imminent will—the same spirit whose breath drove Napoleon in "The Dynasts" "[illegible] will bring us what no man knows. But come what will, death will bring a vast relief.

> We feel that something savours well,
> We note a numb relief withheld before;
> Our well-beloved is prisoner in the cell
> Of Time no more.

And the moral of it all? It is to be found in the "Night in the Old Home," a poem of singular pathetic beauty which contrasts strikingly with Stevenson's "Wandering Willie's Song." The perished people who have housed there come back to him, "a thinker of crooked thoughts upon Life in the sere," and with a passive wistfulness they say:—

> "O let be the wherefore! We severed our years not thus;
> Take of Life what it grants, without question?" they answer me seemingly,
> "Enjoy, suffer, wait; spread the table here freely like us,
> And, satisfied, placid, unfretting, watch Time away beamingly."

Time's Cruelty.

The poems cover more than 40 years, and contain love songs of the 'sixties, a set of country songs, and poems on various subjects besides those grouped under the title-name. More of the rapture and gaiety of life flashes and gleams through the first of these; we have true love sonnets, and one lyric at least, "The Phantom," is exquisite in its tenderness and untarnished romance. But, generally, Time the ironic seems ever standing in the shadowy background. We have the old puzzle, an outcry against Time's cruelty, a blank failure to understand, all in a way pathetic but without the larger pity, the unfretting acceptance which is not far removed from courage. What stands out unquestioned is the poet's power to interpret his mood, to summon the ghosts of forgotten passions, dead loves, to put eternal questions which voice one's own unspoken, unframed thought. It is all done dramatically. Ordinary men and women speak and, without demanding it, claim pity or justice for themselves. Is it art or sheer sincerity that compels us to grant both in a measure which surprises ourselves, or which makes us feel that we have here a man and not merely a book, a man looking out upon the world with a great charity born of compassion and deeming it the sole purpose of his song to tell men what he sees, knowing that his vision will become theirs? At first, especially in the ballad-like tragedies, art seems the last thing to suspect the presence of, but soon we see it everywhere, in the experiments in stanza-making, in the excellent use of the refrain, in the employment of triple rhymes in serious verse, in the elaborate but almost unnoticed working out of a single rhyme scheme. As effects these can best be studied in the "Flirt's Tragedy" and "The Rash Bride," but we cannot record a single failure or a case where everything does not seem quite simple. Such variety of accomplishment in mere form is the best proof that Mr Hardy is not merely a prose writer turned poet, but an instinctive artist who finds a pleasure merely in studying the moods of his instrument. How well he understands it, with what sincerity of heart he plays it, the present volume shows.

The Cambridge Review Jan 20. 1910

Time's Laughingstocks, and other verses. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan & Co. pp. 306. 4/6 net.

The appearance of a new volume from the pen of Mr Hardy is a literary event of considerable importance, and though much of the verse in the book before us has already been printed in periodicals, yet there is much that is new and a good deal that has been altered since its first appearance.

The poems are of very various kinds, and their dates range over almost half a century. On the whole we prefer Mr Hardy's poetry when he writes of Wessex and the people we have learned to know from the novels. In some of these poems he has succeeded in giving in a page or two of easy ballad-like verse the quintessence of what, in its prose form, might have been a 'Wessex Tale,' and though we miss the descriptions of places and persons, the rustic life and talk, which lend such charm to Mr Hardy's novels, yet in the essentials the stories retain in their new form the same simple poignancy and directness that characterised the prose. More than one of the poems deals with Mellstock quire, and it is impossible to read without, as it were, setting the new picture in the frame which the author gave us long ago in 'Under the Greenwood Tree': one of the poems—'The Pine Planters'—demands a knowledge of 'The Woodlanders,' and it is perhaps because Mr Hardy knew that he had given all the uncessentials once and for all in the novels, that he has chosen to tell the new stories more succinctly in verse.

The non-Wessex poems are of rather unequal quality though nearly all characterised by the melancholy which we recognise as typical in Mr Hardy's other work. Their most arresting feature is perhaps the observation of nature which they share with the strictly Wessex poems and display in curiously vivid flashes. We may quote from the first poem in the book:—

> the peewits . . . . wailing soft and loud
> And revealing their pale pinions like a fitful phosphorescence
> Up against the cope of cloud;

This felicity of touch is characteristic of the best of the verse in the volume: we will quote as an example of Mr Hardy's lyric power at its happiest a poem called 'The Farm Woman's Winter':—

> If seasons all were summers,
> And leaves would never fall,
> And hopping casement-comers
> Were foodless not at all,
> And fragile folk might be here
> That white winds bid depart;
> Then one I used to see here
> Would warm my wasted heart.
>
> One frail, who, bravely tilling
> Long hours in gripping gusts,
> Was mastered by their chilling,
> And now his plough share rests.
> So savage winter catches
> The breath of limber things,
> And what I love he snatches,
> And what I love not brings.

This book of short and disconnected poems is at once a complement and a contrast to the long-sustained poetical interest of 'The Dynasts,' by the side of which it should stand on the shelves of all who desire to estimate Mr Hardy's work correctly.

Y.

Southport Guardian (22: 12: '09)

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.

SINCERITY AND STRENGTH.

"Time's Laughing-Stocks," By Thomas Hardy (Macmillan, 4/6 net.)

Mr. Thomas Hardy is now our greatest living novelist; he is also one of the greatest of our poets. His new book of poems certainly enhances his claim. Like Meredith he has had to wait long before his position as a poet was recognised, yet his verse possesses real vital qualities that ensure its life. There is something rugged and elemental in his work, yet it is always strikingly natural and expressive; it is full of humanity and of knowledge of life. It breathes of the realities; it exposes cant and humbug. It does not flow as a limpid stream of metrical exactitudes; it is rather a rushing, unrestrained mountain torrent flowing from the moorland right through the heart of his beloved Wessex. The poems are merely the verse-setting of the prose-stories; they deal with the same questions in the same courageous, unfettered fashion, with the same artistic skill, with the same frank outlook on life.

In the "Dynasts" Mr. Hardy showed that he possessed the true epic spirit; in his new book he returns to the lyrical sphere. The contents of this volume cover a wide period; from 1865 to 1909. The title is happily chosen; it fully expresses Mr. Hardy's view on life. There is to-day no writer of ballads who gets closer to life and to his subjects than does Mr. Hardy.

Oxford & Cambridge Review. Lent Term. 1910

TIME'S LAUGHINGSTOCKS. THOMAS HARDY. Macmillan. 4/6 net.

THERE is that in the poems of Mr. Thomas Hardy which lives, and will live. There is poetry.

The most thankless task that can fall to the lot of man is that of applying the ordinary standards of criticism to the work of genius. It would be possible to point out the scratches on the surface of the gold: it is impossible to deny the gold itself. We might say: this is not formally correct, that is not orthodox, the other is not refined. But of no line in the whole book can we truly say: this is not poetry. In short, Mr. Hardy is a poet, even a greater poet than he is a writer of prose.

Our helpless, and at times even unwilling pleasure in this poetry of his is not the outcome of a natural predilection for his choice of subject and expression. It is compelled by the presence of that indefinable thing which constitutes the spirit of poetry, and which, like the stone of the alchemist, turns lead to gold. Mr. Hardy spares us nothing of the elemental, the brutal, the weak, in the human nature that he lays bare before us, he stirs more than he uplifts the soul of his reader.

It is well-nigh impossible to say wherein lies the value of the work. Collected from many years, it is very unequal both in merit and in power. Frankly animal in inspiration for the most part, it never reaches any noble level. Love of youth, amounting to sensuality, and fear of old age, amounting to cowardice, are its keynotes. Its religion hovers between contempt and resentment. Its romance is that of the hedgerow and the alehouse. Its youth is selfishly hot-blooded, its decline chilled but impenitent and regretful. Among its women purity, among its men constancy, are sadly to seek, and its tragedies are those of the flesh, not of the spirit. Its lighter phases recall the tavern songs of a century gone. "The Dark-eyed Gentleman" reminds us of a Cambridgeshire song whose antiquity is its sole claim to respectability.

It is more than possible that in this last fact lies the explanation of the indubitable strength of Mr. Hardy's poetry. It is English to a degree that would be impossible of attainment to any one less saturated in the spirit of real England. By "real England" we do not mean England in a top hat, but England in a smock. In the North that England has largely disappeared, absorbed into the thickly-planted towns, whose more "advanced" civilisation has submerged, rather than purged, the natural full-bloodedness of the race, save where it has eliminated it by a process of emasculation. London has performed the same function for a large portion of the South. There remain those Eastern counties which lie beyond London's range, and Wessex, dear to Mr. Hardy, and it is the latter which is most truly English of all. Perhaps of Wessex alone can it be said with confidence that all its virtues are English virtues, and its faults English faults, and sturdy faults at that: and the best of us must admit that a man's own faults are those that need the least excuse.

The Bookman Feb. 1910

THOMAS HARDY'S POEMS.*

There are innumerable definitions of poetry, but none that covers it. It is everywhere, and takes so many forms that it easily eludes every attempt to imprison it in a phrase, and

"still escapes,
Like Proteus, in variety of shapes."

It is "the best words in the best order," but it is a good deal more than that; nor have you uttered the last word about it when you have said, with Shelley, it "lifts the veil from the hidden beauty of the world, and makes familiar things be as if they were not familiar." It is the essential spirit of youth, and therefore poets die young; even with such as Tennyson and Browning, it is merely the man that grows old and not the poet; for without youth there is no dreaming, and without dreams there is no rapture, no hope, no seeing the budding morrow at midnight, no life at all of the spirit.

Yet there is certainly also a poetry that has no youth in it; an authentic poetry that, so far from making familiar things as if they were not familiar, is at its highest when it most faithfully brings their familiarity home to us. This is a sort of poetry of middle age, that has lost faith in the visions and ideals of youth, and can find inspiration only in harsh matters of fact. Crabbe was one such middle-aged poet; he saw life steadily, but he never saw more than half of it; too often he saw but clouds where Wordsworth saw also the rainbow; things evil where Shakespeare saw also the soul of goodness that was in them. But Crabbe was an exception; no poet before him has been so consistently one-sided, has written so almost exclusively of the gloom and sordid griefs of humanity, and none since, except Mr. Thomas Hardy, who has much in common with him.

But Mr. Hardy is a greater poet than Crabbe; he has a richer imagination, a profounder insight, a higher dramatic power, a far subtler and wider mastery of expression, though he rigorously limits himself to the same drab, unlovely phases of rural experience. Most of his ballads and lyrics go to reveal, realistically, vividly, and with grim imaginative pity,

Withal, we have no other poet who can write such poetry as is in "Time's Laughingstocks"; it is darkly imaginative, full of thought, observation, and feeling, and sternly true, so far as it goes; the poetry of disenchantment, if you will, of disillusion, of unhappiness, of the negation of things, but within its limits it touches greatness and is no perishable stuff. Mr. Hardy is resolute to present the plain facts of existence, but they are always the unlovely and the unpleasant facts, and there are as many others that he entirely overlooks. He insists that you shall see the truth, yet he shows you only half of it, or less; there is surely good as well as evil, fidelity as well as faithlessness, laughter as well as weeping, but he cannot see the stars because he shuts himself up with his own candlelight. The finest of his ballads have an amazing strength, they have pathos, or saturnine humour, and a live, dramatic intensity, but they have no sweetness, no spiritual beauty; their passions are of the earth earthy, their feet are in the mire; there is no flash of light divine, no hint of wings in them.

An eternal monotone of sadness sounds all through the book, but if there is no note of hope, there is everywhere a high, indomitable courage, a stubborn, stoical endurance, and here and there the sadness is lightened with something of grace and wistful fancy, as in such poems as "On the Departure Platform," "Her Definition," "The Sigh," or, especially, "In a Cathedral City." Still, when all's said, Mr. Hardy's real power lies unquestionably in his sombre realism, his mordant irony, his acute sensitiveness to the vanity, the misery, the littlenesses, the mortality of human life, and in his great gift of tragic narrative, and it were absurd to demand of him more than he has to give. He is the poet of the world's woe; where others have found hope and the promise of better things, he finds but shame and suffering and despair; he has turned his back on the sunrise and his songs are all of the night, and the darkness and horror and mystery of it are in them, and a forceful, changing music, gusty, mournful, brooding, thunderous, by turns, as of night-winds searching through waste places of the world or losing their way in the blind void beyond it.

A. ST. JOHN ADCOCK.

The Daily Graphic Dec 24th 1909

MR. HARDY'S PESSIMISM.

["Time's Laughingstocks, and Other Verses." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan and Co.) 4s. 6d. net.]

(Reviewed by Alfred Noyes.)

Mr. Thomas Hardy's new book of poems, containing hardly a poem that does not proclaim the hand of a master, is from beginning to end the very voice of pessimism, but it is the pessimism of Shakespeare's tragedies, a pessimism so profound that it goes down to the depths where construction begins. The motto of it might be, 'Life's a poor player'; with the book of Ecclesiastes it would cry, "All is vanity," and with Job it would sometimes be tempted to curse the Omnipotent Dramatist and die; but—what it really does is to find the connections, links, harmonies, ironic harmonies perhaps, but still harmonies, between one detail and another; to find meanings, bitter meanings apparently and primarily, but still meanings, in the meaningless; to find, in the chaotic, a little order, rhythm, and music; and this, so far as it goes, is as the very name of poetry implies, not destructive, but constructive. Let Mr. Hardy give us the stage and the poor player, and the soul of man will flash to the Dramatist. To put the matter in its simplest form we must have All or Nothing for an answer when we ask what lies behind the scenes of the Universe. Mr. Hardy does not answer "Nothing." Let us have two phrases, as in merely the title of this book, connected, based on an artistic, even if ironic, harmony, and we have all the basis for a constructive philosophy that the wildest optimist can desire. For there is then no limit to the modulations of the music we can draw from them: they are, necessarily, logically, fragments of an infinite symphony ranging from hell to heaven.

The Cry of Macbeth.

Destructive poetry is a contradiction in terms. The tragedies of Shakespeare are not gospels of annihilation emitted in a fundamentally meaningless harmony from the baseless brain of an Accident from Nowhere. The content and import of a work of art are not to be found in the same way as those of a philosophic system or a work of science. The cry of Macbeth—"Out, out, brief candle!" is not to be taken as a cold scientific statement of the meaninglessness of human life. Our fathers understood this, when they set the book of Ecclesiastes before their passionate Gospel. When Shakespeare wrote "Life's a poor player that struts and frets his hour upon the stage," the words contain more than a negation. They have passion, pain, and, most important of all, they have profound inner harmonies. Tragedy is not merely negation. It is a sloughing off of the temporal for the Eternal. What infinities of aspiration are involved in those two words—"his hour"! There is a positive, a constructive element in such poetry, which goes to swell the cry of Calvary—"Why hast thou forsaken me?"

The Poet's Remorseless Power.

There is no sublimity in the death of an insubstantial toad under an accidental and nonsensical harrow. But there is sublimity in the dying cry of Hamlet to the friend who would fain have followed him, "Absent thee from felicity awhile," a cry which, to speak plainly, contains almost the whole of the fundamental dogma of Christianity. Mr. Hardy sees the skull beneath the face of beauty, and reminds us of it with remorseless power. So did the Hebrew prophets. He sees men as insects crawling over their little globe; but he is only able to do this because, as a poet, he can soar high enough. It is the soul of one of these same men which knocks thus at the doors of Eternity.

"The Two Rosalinds."

We have spoken above of the way in which Mr. Hardy takes two or three details, disconnected to the merely philosophic or, at any rate, to the merely scientific eye, and establishes an artistic harmony, a connection, even if ironic, between them. A good example of this is the remarkable poem entitled "The Two Rosalinds." It is the story of a man who enters a theatre where, forty years ago, he had seen a Rosalind. The new Rosalind disappoints him; but, as he comes out, he is confronted by an old hag hawking the words of the play. "So you don't like her, sir?" said she. "Ah!—I was once that Rosalind! Now some forty years ago. I used to say, 'Come woo me, woo me!" and she struck the attitude.

Clear as noon,
My Rosalind was here . . . Thereon the band
withinside lightly
Beat up a merry tune.

It is obvious that such harmonic ironies are too remote, too vast, to give up their secret to science, or to anything else than a symphony which should sum up the whole universe. It is only the resultant voice of the whole that can give us the whole truth; and, from Mr. Hardy's previous poems, we can at least add one voice to the present choir. The starving thrush, for instance, of this volume needs to be supplemented by the darkling thrush of an earlier book, who, frail, gaunt, and small, sent his soul upon the wintry gloom:—

That I could think there trembled through
His happy, good-night air,
Some blessed hope whereof he knew,
And I was unaware.

Meat for the Strong.

But great art does not need to be "aware" of these things any more than it needs a definite "moral" to its stories. This book is meat for the strong; but so is the book of Ecclesiastes, and the pessimism of both is so profound that it postulates, without affirming, a passionate gospel. For there is one reality that they leave us—the grim reality of infinite passion, infinite pain; and, in Mr. Hardy's case, infinite compassion, too. His starving thrush demands, like the red-breast of Blake, an enraged heaven. He strikes notes which demand only one answer from the symphonic whole—"not one of these shall fall to the ground without your Father." Negation may be swept aside at once. Amid all our talk of "progress," mankind cannot, without self-stultification, acquiesce in a theory of a universe based on Nothing and ending in Nothing; or even in one which involves the proceeding of the greater from the less—the conscious and living from the less than conscious. Mr. Hardy is to be thanked for bringing us face to face with those grim realities which the religion of the future (and, if mankind is in earnest about itself, some religion it needs now more than ever, and needs passionately) will once more have to embrace. "In poetry," said Matthew Arnold, "our race will come to find an ever surer and surer stay"; for the inevitable answer of poetry to the question of All or Nothing is—All.

A Deep Significance.

Great art establishes for us the hidden harmonies of the universe and reveals our membership of the whole divine body, linking details which science cannot even get into the same field of vision, linking the shrivelled moth with the wheeling stars and the passion of the Godhead. There is no gap in the scheme of things for the great artist in his infinite field any more than for the scientist in his finite field. The poet cannot pluck a flower "without troubling of a star." There is no severance, nothing but unity. If the Omnipotent Creator dies into immortal life with the meanest of his dying creatures, a fuller light is thrown upon the poem of "The Darkling Thrush," a more triumphant passion throbs with a deeper significance in Blake's caged bird. But it is not a different or contradictory light or passion. It is only, for these poems, the logical completion of their own music, which demanded that fulfilment, led up to it, step by step, from their first postulate, with mathematical precision. But to arrive at that music, to arrive at the first postulate on which that music is based, we have to clear away all the cant and falsehood and illusion which perplex the modern artist. We have to avoid mistaking fen-fires for the stars. Mr. Hardy's pessimism makes short work of illusions; and, as we have said, goes to the depths where construction begins.

ALFRED NOYES.

The Kelso Chronicle

Feb 11th 1910

"Time's Laughing-stocks" by Thomas Hardy, is a collection of poems whose theme seldom varies. It is the old materialised earth spirit reanimated in sex. And that of the most sordid description. It is rural life that Mr Hardy especially delights in, and it is surely in such life that immorality takes its most repulsive form. It is all so incongruous with the chaste and lovely background of inanimate Nature, while the people themselves, living as they do with nose to earth, seldom rise to a sufficiently elevated position to learn how to relieve their very sordidness by even a slight touch of idealism or of bare artistic beauty. It is of such clods and of such matters that Mr Hardy sings no elevated theme, and the moral sometimes hard to find. One frequently wonders whether the poet is not writing approvingly of deeds which have not even a grain of beauty in their doing to recommend them. Just as a banal joke may be tolerated if it is clever, so may an evil action be excused, if not pardoned, if it is beautiful, but there should be neither toleration nor excuse for mere filth and mire. Yet, even if Mr Hardy's verses savour much of Baudelaire and the French *fin de siecle* school, now happily dead or dying, t ken as pure poetry, there can be no mistaking their greatness. Every poem in the volume shows him entirely worthy to rank with George Meredith and William Watson. Both of these latter poets have, upon occasion, taken such themes as comprise the best part of "Time's Laughing-stocks," and if they have treated them with somewhat greater delicacy, they have certainly seldom, if ever, done so, more artistically, so far as pure diction and form are concerned. For absolute tragedy "A Wife and Another," "The Rash Bride," "A Tramp-woman's Tragedy," and "A Sunday Morning Tragedy," may be cited, and they stand, amongst such, almost unrivalled. Again the "Love Lyrics" are bursting with such passion as one rarely finds in modern love-songs. The following, entitled "1967," if a little gruesome, will serve as an example:—

"In five score summers! all new eyes,
New minds, new modes, new fools, new wise;
New woes to weep; new joys to prize.
With nothing left of me and you
In that live century's vivid view
Beyond a pinch of dust or two.
A century which, if not sublime,
Will show, I doubt not, at its prime,
A scope above this blinkered time.
—Yet what to me how far above?
For I would only ask thereof
That thy worm should be my worm Love."

Messrs Macmillan are to be congratulated upon this addition to their long list of notable books, and no worthier hope regarding it can be expressed than that it may have as wide a circulation as it undoubtedly deserves. That would mean a circulation nothing less than world-wide.

The Birmingham Post

Dec 17th 1909

*MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

The profound difference between the genius of a great prose-writer and the genius of a great poet prevents Mr. Hardy from informing his verse with the exquisite qualities peculiar to the poetry of the highest order. Even when he employs one of the lovely lyrical movements fashioned by William Barnes, he breaks up its long, undulating melody by abruptnesses and turns of a prosaic sort. Being a master of the large, loose, fluctuant rhythms of prose, he is apt to use these in place of the strictly measured flow of words, which gives to poetry its music and proper harmony. No doubt, the movement of prose can sometimes be partly introduced into blank verse of a very dramatic character; but even Shakespeare was unable to accomplish this without years of incessant practice in the stricter forms of metre; and, moreover, he left his instrument so slackly strung that Milton had to fashion a stronger, firmer, and more resonant measure for the purposes of narrative art. Mr. Hardy's experiments in new metres are born, for the most part, from the difficulty of handling with ease a strange, delicate, and somewhat incongenial medium of expression. This difficulty Mr. Hardy tries to evade by striking out into novel forms of verse. He feels that he has something original to say, and he wants to find an original way of saying it. As a rule, however, he fails to achieve originality in the matter of style, and falls into mere eccentricity. Undoubtedly there is genius in his poems—fundamental genius, such as no English poet of the younger generation is, unhappily, able to display; but it is the genius of the great prose-writer, who is now writing, so to speak, with his left hand. The conceptions are sometimes magnificent, and always interesting; but the execution is commonly faulty. Judging from the pieces in "Time's Laughingstocks," dated 1865-7, Mr. Hardy did not, like the author of "Love in the Valley," possess in youth a splendid native lyrical gift which was afterwards overlaid by a prose habit. Mr. Hardy was a born prose-writer, and the form of his earlier verses is even less remarkable than the form of his later poetic work.

All this is very curious. For, judging from his prose work alone, one would have said that Mr. Hardy was a great novelist in whom a still greater poet had been lost. The peculiarity of his prose lies in its emotional quality—an emotional quality which neither Ruskin nor Burke ever captured; it is something intensely quick and human; a sharp immediacy of feeling in regard to the elemental things of life which makes a man womanish if it is not balanced by an uncommon amount of intellectual power. In Mr. Hardy's novels it is thus balanced, and the interplay of wild feeling and cold intellectual analysis results in a glowing irony of a strangely poignant cast.

But in "Time's Laughingstocks" the emotional quality is not communicated with the same force as it is in the prose stories. The rhythm of the verse is seldom moulded on the flow of feelings which it seeks to convey; the poems are, in fact, extremely interesting examples of "fundamental brainwork" untouched by that fire from the heart which is the great thing in poetry. The structural part is always fine. Mr. Hardy tells his tales with a marvellous economy of means. He breaks away from the traditions of the dramatic and narrative poets of the romantic school, and returns to the classic simplicity of the ancient ballad writers; he keeps to the large, clear outlines of the action, and instead of analysing the feelings of his characters, he depicts them in the natural way by deeds. "A Tramp-woman's Tragedy," beginning:

> From Wynyard's Gap the livelong day,
> The livelong day,
> We beat afoot the northward way,
> We had travelled times before.

is a superb example of his direct and rapid style. The diction is unusually musical for Mr. Hardy, and in five swinging stanzas the reader is hurried through a wild tale of murder, hangman's work, miscarriage, madness, and ghastly despair. In spite, however, of this sudden accumulation of horrors, something is wanting, and this something, we think, is the strange, brooding atmosphere of tragic feeling which Mr. Hardy seldom fails to convey when he uses prose as a medium of expression. In one of the poems now collected, he calls himself

> A thinker of crooked thoughts upon Life in the sere,
> And on That which consigns men to night after showing the day to them.

Perhaps it is because his passionate despair has worn itself into apathy that his verse lacks the throbbing music which is born from the pulsations of feeling.

*"Time's Laughingstocks. By Thomas Hardy. Methuen.) 4s. 6d. net.

(A self-contradictory article, but suggestive)

The Scotsman (Dec 9. '09)

TIME'S LAUGHING-STOCKS, and Other Verses. By Thomas Hardy. 4s. 6d. net. London: Macmillan & Co.

People addicted to prose fiction often speak disparagingly about poetry, and never seem to read it; but a reader charmed by any of Mr Thomas Hardy's novels would find himself under the same spell in his books of poetry. His new volume is, indeed, far from being so stupendous an affair as "The Dynasts," but in its own way it is no less strong. It is a miscellany of collected pieces, some of which have attracted attention in the periodical literature of recent years, and some of which—noticeable among them being some love-poems and two sonnets addressed respectively to "an actress" and to "an impersonator of Rosalind"—are dated away back in the sixties of last century. The poet's preface warns a reader, "in respect of those lyrics penned in the first person," that they are to be regarded, in the main, as "dramatic monologues by different characters." And elsewhere the collection gives ample and pleasing evidence that this writer is at his best when telling a dramatic story or objectising some type of English character. There are tragedies of rural life; and one of the many ballad-like pieces in the book works out a tragedy of a flirt. There are pictures of Casterbridge fair, and it is a very old-fashioned buck who, with something of the grim melancholy of Villon, muses upon the days when he was a dancing man, thus:—

> Who now recalls those crowded rooms
> Of old, yclept "The Argyll,"
> Where to the deep Drum-polka's booms
> We swung in standard style?
> Whither have danced those damsels now!
> Is Death the partner who doth moke
> Their wormy chaps and bare?
> Do their spectres spin like sparks within
> The smoky halls of the Prince of Sin
> To a thunderous Jullien air?

Not a few pieces touch a solemn note of that sad, impressive philosophy of disillusion and necessity that sounds as a bass in all the later work of this writer. The book, for the rest, has in its art a sombre beauty not less powerful than its keen naturalistic interest in the vagaries of human nature.

The Oxford Chronicle

Dec. 17th 1909

POEMS OF DISILLUSION.*

Most of our modern poets spend their time dusting in their store-room. Its furniture is frail thoughts so dusted and polished that their substance dwindles at length into shining shadow. To balance a whole library of such fragilities comes this volume from Mr. Hardy, composed of poems written at widely severed dates and in many contrasting moods and circumstances but made cohesive and at unity with one another by the unvarying strength of the personality which conceived and created. "Time's Laughing-stocks" Mr. Hardy has called them, though it is less the laughter of Time than the guffawing of Nature whose echoes we catch like harsh bells jangling. "Pull down the curtain, the farce is over," is a familiar death-saying of history. With one gesture of violence Mr. Hardy draws up the curtain to show how grim a thing the stage is when bereft of its trappings—bare boards, grey light, litter, melancholy. This is the poetry of disillusion, stopping short of despair but starting leagues away from that country of delight which is also, we are glad to remember, the heritage to us of the poets. The happiness of their delight is replaced in Mr. Hardy by brooding tenderness that he cannot give us gilding. He looks at life as man has made it, and at the earth following its course with little thought of man's pleasure. The four verses which he wrote when he was living for an hour in the seventeenth century, and so stepped in manner into the classic line of the "legitimate" poets, begin:

> Let me enjoy the earth no less
> Because the all-enacting Might
> That fashioned forth its loveliness
> Had other aims than my delight.

And though the qualification is slight compared with the mighty qualification to "Let me enjoy" which is provided by man himself in his own lust and impotence, and which is illustrated in these poems with so stark a nudity, yet we find in these four verses in a minor key not only Mr. Hardy's philosophy but Mr. Hardy's hope. Elsewhere he is more of the positive physician:—

> Yet would men look at true things
> And unilluded view things,
> And count to bear undue things—
> The real might mend the seeming,
> Facts better their foredeeming,
> And Life its disesteeming.

In poetic place Mr. Hardy is with Browning as a poet of drama. He shows his virtuosity in his manner only, for in his matter he [illegible] with [illegible] is set upon the ways of men with women. In these poems, indeed, it is less wage than the way, for Mr. Hardy throughout them all is very close to the earth—the soil is the soil of Wessex—and appetite follows upon labour. As a veteran Mr. Hardy has turned away from his natural medium. Does he find that in the limitation, the stern compression, even the tyranny of verse, a parallel to those natural phases whose end is everywhere bitterness and vexation of spirit? Certainly this metric arbitrariness gives the ultimate value and affords the final proof of that resource and economy which more than anything else stamps greatness upon Mr. Hardy's poetry. For he puts a whole lifetime into a page of verse, an epoch into a stanza, an experience into a single line. It is inevitable, perhaps, that contemporary poetry should go into the line of continuity somewhat by reason of its recollection. Many times in these poems there is the great recollection, in the sonnets, of Shakspere himself, and in such lines as these—

> But yet I kissed you; whereon you again
> As of old kissed me. Why, why was it so?
> Do you cleave to me after that light-tongued blow?
> If you scorned me at eventide, how love then?
> The thing is dark, Dear. I do not know—

and still more in such stanzas—

> Thus I won Orlando to me
> In my then triumphant days when I had charm and maidenhood,
> Now some forty years ago. I used to say, *Come, woo me, woo me*,
> And she struck the attitude—

Mr. Hardy is, despite himself, Browning, lover and dramatist. In the ballads, which are the weightier part, Mr. Hardy makes drama in his own manner with the eternal elements. They celebrate the dual tragedy, loveliness ravished by man, pleasantness made repulsive and laughter-stirring by the turning of Time:—

> —crease where curve was,
> Where was raven, grizzle—
> Pits, where peonies once did dwell.

And what gave tragedy to Mr. Hardy's prose gives grimmer tragedy to his poetry; it is shorn of all softening excrescence, all palliative of externals, sensuousness is replaced by strength, bitter meaning has bleak language, suffering is expressed by the sharp word and the acid phrase:—

> Too fragrant was Life's early bloom,
> Too tart the fruit it brought.

And again:—

> But—after love what comes?
> A scene that lours,
> A few sad vacant hours,
> And then, the Curtain.

And again:—

> So savage winter catches
> The breath of limber things,
> And what I love he snatches,
> And what I love not, brings.

The pathos of this poetry springs chiefly from illicit love, its irony from conformity to convention:

> Their slumbers have been normal after one day more of formal
> Matrimonial commonplace and household life's mechanic gear.

> Yes, we'll wed, my little fay,
> And you shall write you mine,
> And in a villa chastely gray
> We'll house and sleep and dine. . .

> When we abide alone,
> No leapings each to each,
> But syllables in frigid tone
> Of household speech.

It is the philosophy of disillusion, bitterness both without the law and within it. But the law was made for man, and a new world is awaiting the new law. Mr. Hardy in this fine volume which comes from a man of many ages nowhere "strikes the attitude" of Law-giver. But he drops the tablet of stone that came from a Victorian Sinai.

G.M.A.

The Queen Feb. 5th 1910

Time's Laughingstocks and other Verses. By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan. 4s. 6d.)

MR HARDY'S poems, written at varying dates, all bear the same stamp of an extraordinary individuality. The subjects are for the most part depressing—in "A Trampwoman's Tragedy" and "A Sunday Morning Tragedy," there is, indeed, unmitigated gloom and terror. But though Mr Hardy seems to accept the fact that life holds nothing very good he meets Fate, as a rule, with an ironical philosophy which is not unkindly. His views find rather a charming expression in some verses entitled "Autumn in the Park," in the reflections of an old woman who is raking up leaves, and which conclude with

> Yet, dear, though one may sigh,
> Raking up leaves;
> New leaves will dance on high—
> Earth never grieves!—
> Will not, when missed am I
> Raking up leaves.

He is, of course, a novelist before he is a poet, his sense of narrative being stronger than that of rhythm, but, nevertheless, there is plenty of music of a kind in his verses, and sometimes he gives us a beautiful lyric. "At Casterbridge Fair" and "After the Fair" both have a very dramatic ring, and there is a poem called "One we Knew," which is a remarkably vivid and suggestive bit of descriptive writing. "The Dead Quire," written in ballad form, is one of the most notable in a collection of poems, not one of which is commonplace, and in each one of which the personality of the writer is its dominant characteristic.

The Outlook Feb 4-11.

"The Dynasts," in one volume, gives one the effect of a masterpiece that has no parallel. It is easy to say that this shadowy world-drama has no place upon the stage. It is easy to say that the men and women who pass through its pages are phantoms rather than flesh and blood. But the atmosphere of history terribly pervades these pages, as though the author's "Phantom Intelligences" were actually hovering around us. Vast masses of troops glide past us to death, and the battlefield becomes as with something more than human memory. It is this incalculable something, whether from the frozen snow of Moscow or the Walcheren bogland, that Mr. Hardy's genius preserves as perhaps no other writer ever preserved it. Maeterlinck himself cannot suggest shadowy companionship more inevitably: "The wind continues to prevail as the spot is left desolate, the darkness increases, rain descends more heavily, and the scene is blotted out. . . . The two multitudes lie down to sleep, and all is quiet but for the spluttering of the green wood fires, which now that the human tongues are still seem to hold a conversation of their own." People who love the novels regretted this "Spectacle in the Likeness of a Drama," which has absorbed Mr. Hardy

Birmingham Post

Jan. 11th 1911

We are glad to note that Messrs. Macmillan have issued a new one-volume edition (7s. 6d.) of "The Dynasts," for Mr. Thomas Hardy's epic drama of the Napoleonic wars ought to be familiar to everyone who can appreciate the Wessex [illegible] whose finest qualities it reproduces [illegible] so to the minority who care but little for fiction, and value imaginative work of pure poetic quality above all things. One has heard "The Dynasts" spoken of—presumably on account of its wholly original form—as a freak, an eccentricity, a prostitution of talent, and perhaps such views may still prevail here and there. But no one whose judgment in literature is of any account has ever questioned the extraordinary force of Mr. Hardy's presentation of his great story, the vividness of his pictures, the profound and ineffaceable impression which the whole thing must leave upon an ordinarily receptive mind. Whatever else it may be, "The Dynasts" is one of the supreme works of imaginative literature in the English language.

Yorkshire Observer

Dec 15. 1910

Messrs. Macmillan have published in one volume (uniform with the "Globe" edition) Mr. Thomas Hardy's monumental epic-drama "The Dynasts." Tolstoy's "Peace and War" has been regarded as giving the general reader the best grip of the forces and passions which were let loose in the Napoleonic wars. But Mr. Hardy's work is far more embracing in its scope; it includes in its manifold scenes a glimpse at least of nearly every leading personage and event in that vast cataclysm. Whether for literary or historical students it is a book of much fascination

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Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics & Reveries.

"LIFE'S LITTLE IRONIES."

[Studies in the poignant manner of Mr. THOMAS HARDY'S "Satires of Circumstance" in the April number of *The Fortnightly Review*.]

IN SIX MISFYTTES.

(These, being merely imitations of the originals really flatter rather than ridicule them)

I.

AT THE MOTHER-IN-LAW'S.

"YOUR son deserts me on Tuesday next,"
Remarks the wife in a wailing croon;
"I cannot disguise I am greatly vext
That he should be at it again so soon;
He only eloped with me last year,
And the anniversary 's not yet here."

"I warned you once," says the mother-in-law;
"'Tis in his blood; he is not to blame;
His heritage had this fatal flaw,
For his poor dear father was just the same;
From the first time out, when he ran with me,
He was always eloping with somebody.

II.

AT THE FAIR.

They meet at a fair where the hot booths steam;
The girl and her rival, muslin-gowned;
Says one: "He stood me a large ice-cream!"
And the other, "We rode on the merry-go-round!"
"He patted my cheek and he pulled my hair!"
"He kept on pinching my arm, so there!"

A woman's shadow is thrown between,
And her breath comes sharp through the gas-jets' reek;
"I 'm wife,' she says, "to the man you mean
Who mauled your arm and your hair and cheek;
But I know that he loves me best, and why?
Three nights running he blacked my eye!"

III.

IN THE LOUNGE.

The peer's heir sits on his honeymoon
In a loud hotel with his chorus-bride.
A gramophone grinds a rasping tune
That tickles the page-boys. Deep inside,
The future baron is thrilled right through,
And "Dearest," he says, "it sounds like you."

Her lips relax from the toothsome smile
That smirks through the picture-posteard panes;
"I sang it," says she; "t used to beguile
"The only lover that stirred my veins.
I married you just for your rank, old dear,
But the song is my true love's souvenir;
I breathed it into the gramophone
When I bade good-bye to the First Trombone!"

(*To be continued.*) O. S.

VI.

AT THE WINNING-POST.

She waits in the grand-stand's grassy patch,
Externally cool, but her manner clothes
A throbbing heart, for they ride a match,
The man she loves and the man she loathes;
A hundred sovereigns they ride to win,
With a purse, her sewing, to put them in.

Neck and neck, at identical rates,
They ride to the finish, a clear dead-heat.
"Shall we run it off?" says the man she hates;
And the other, "Not me; I'm much too beat!"
Then the first: "There are prizes enough for two,
And the declaration I'll leave to you."
"Very well," says the man she loves, "you're free
To pocket the purse—the cash for me!"

O. S.

"LIFE'S LITTLE IRONIES."

[Studies in the poignant manner of Mr. THOMAS HARDY'S "Satires of Circumstance" in the April number of *The Fortnightly Review*.]

IN SIX MISFYTTES.

(*Concluded.*)

IV.

IN A PUBLIC PLACE.

THEY sit on a seat of the esplanade,
The buxom cook and the housemaid trim.
Spring-fashions, to left and right displayed,
Escape their eyes, which are all for him,
As he swaggers by in his martial gear,
A perfect dream of a bombardier.

"He gave me this bangle of gold to wear,"
Says the housemaid; "must have cost him a pound."
The cook says nothing, but sits in a stare,
Thinking, "I guess where the money was found;
It came from my hard-earned wage, no doubt—
Two shillings an hour to walk me out!"

V.

ON THE RIVER.

The barge swings slow on the slow stream's breast,
And the bargee leans to his oar, dull brute.
A curious apathy fills his chest,
Though his wife is trailing her off-side boot
In the ochreous ooze, and he hears her purr
As his mate at the tiller makes eyes at her.

A lurch and a slip—she is overboard,
And her lover dives in at the nearest place.
No sign on the part of her legal lord
As the waters close on their last embrace,
Except that he smiles, "I shall miss them both,"
And leans to his oar with a grateful oath.

The Times Nov 19 1914

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE. Lyrics and Reveries, with Miscellaneous Pieces. By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.)

Poetry always tends to travel farther and farther away from prose; but, while it remains a living art, there is always an effort made by some poets to bring it nearer to prose again. They are sick of the insipidity, the too easy music and emotion, of over-poetical poetry, just as some preachers react from the excessive unction of the ordinary pulpit orator. Meredith and Mr. Hardy, coming at the end of the Romantic movement and contemporaries of that extreme poet Swinburne, have been both prose writers who tried to impart some of the virtues of prose to poetry. But both have known, too, that a poem has no right to exist if what it says could be better said in prose; and their verse, even when it seems crabbed or morose or tantalizing, is still thoroughly poetic in form. It may be that Meredith is too intellectual in his verse, that reason rather than emotion gives it its continuity, that Mr. Hardy is too despondent, too conscious of the dullness of routine for a poet; but neither of them makes us feel that he has mistaken his vocation. We might say to Mr. Hardy—why try to be a poet at all, when you think what you do think of life? But he can answer to us that life, in spite of what he thinks about it, does move him to write poetry, and a poetry which has the unexpected beauty of winter upon it.

> While rain, with eve in partnership,
> Descended darkly, drip, drip, drip,
> Beyond the last lone lamp I passed,
> Walking slowly, whispering sadly,
> Two linked loiterers, wan, downcast:
> Some heavy thought constrained each face,
> And blinded them to time and place.

That is the first verse from a poem in this new volume; and it has a music which seems to order the dull desponding words against their will. Or here is another verse from the next poem:—

> The travelled sun dropped
> To the north-west, low and lower,
> The pony's trot grew slower,
> And then we stopped.

A bare statement of fact; but still it makes its music and falls naturally into the stanza, so that it is like something we remember vividly without knowing why, except that it was part of the evening and we ourselves were part of it.

But there is a section of this book, the fifteen Satires of Circumstance which give it its title, in which we feel that Mr. Hardy would have done better in prose. It is not that they are prosaic, but that he does not manage to tell enough in verse. In each he gives us merely a situation, an ugly situation, with all the emphasis of verse laid on the ugliness, as if he had a brief against life; and in each case we feel that the whole truth is not told and could not be told in this medium. There are some themes fit only for prose because verse is too summary for them. They need patience and a sense of justice and a boundless psychological curiosity to expound them. Such are the themes which Mr. Hardy has chosen for these fifteen short poems; and he seems merely to throw them at us impatiently, as if he wanted to destroy our foolish optimism, as if he were determined to tell us ugly secrets about life in as few words as possible. He has a mood about the universe in which he reminds us of the extreme anti-patriot who is sick of fulsome compliments paid to his own country. "God's in his Heaven; all's right with the world." Is it? says Mr. Hardy; and offers a few instances to the contrary. But he seems to waste himself in such telling of home truths, especially as we are convinced that they are only half truths. We want him to be more disinterested and not to be an *advocatus diaboli* because others have been too obsequious in justifying the ways of God to man.

But in another section, Poems of 1912-13, he is less argumentative and less irritable. Here, for instance, is the last verse of a Lament that seems to be written to an old tune to suit its old sadness:—

> And we are here staying
> Amid these stale things
> Who care not for gaying
> As those junketings
> That used so to joy her,
> And never to cloy her,
> As us they cloy. . . . But
> She is shut, she is shut,
> From the cheer of them, dead
> To all done and said
> In a yew-arched bed.

And in "The Haunter" he gives us another tune, strange and alluring, as if he had heard some one playing it on a pipe out in the darkness and had fitted his own words to it:—

> Yes, I accompany him to places
> Only dreamers know,
> Where the shy hares show their faces,
> Where the night rooks go;
> Into old aisles where the past is all to him,
> Close as his shade can do,
> Always lacking the power to call to him,
> Near as I reach thereto.

It is curious how at the end of a long practice in the art of prose Mr. Hardy turns more and more to poetry and writes it as if he were a young poet still utterly unreconciled to life. You might call him a pagan, except that he cannot forget all the hopes which Christianity has offered in between and all the sense of the meaning of humanity with which it has enlarged our minds. He keeps that sense; but in him it is baffled. Men, he feels, deserve that immense hope which has traversed the world; but he is haunted by the fear that it is vain, that men have enriched their natures for a future that will never be. And yet he loves them for this enrichment; and that love, growing intenser with years, has turned him from prose to poetry. It is useless to argue with him about this; we have only to note what has happened to him, and to be grateful for the art with which he expresses it. The last poem in the book is the "Song of the Soldiers," which was published only the other day. There is a faith in that and a rebuke to the faithless; and in all his poems, even those which seem bitterest with disappointment, there is perhaps a faith implied, though the author may not, because he cannot, put it into words; because so many things in life seem to contradict it, and with their incessant contradiction trouble the mind like an argument pertinaciously renewed.

PALL MALL GAZETTE. 29 Dec. 14

POETRY'S LITTLE IRONIES.

"Satires of Circumstance: Lyrics and Reveries, with Miscellaneous Pieces." By Thomas Hardy. (London: Macmillan.) 4s. 6d. net.

"New Poems." By Robert and Mrs. Browning. (London: Smith, Elder.) 5s. net.

The point is worth noting that in the most ambitious work he has ever attempted, Mr. Hardy has rigidly conformed to a structural design. "The Dynasts," now so amply recognised as a work of genius by his countrymen in a patriotic epoch, employs more of what the critics call machinery than anything else he has ever written. This sufficiently appears in the acted version to make the fact appeal even to those who have never read the work in print and unabridged. Now, these concessions to tradition are rarely successful in the case of so unconventional a writer. The only parallel we recall offhand is Whitman, who adopted metre for the two most popular things he ever wrote; and it is at least arguable that "Pioneers" and the famous elegy on Lincoln are not merely the most popular of Whitman's poems, but the greatest as well, alike in point of definite aim achieved and the dignity of their subject. If it is urged in Whitman's case, however, that the popularity of these pieces arises from their obedience to the dictates of prosody, the argument loses its force in the case of "The Dynasts," for whatever the epic-drama gains by the historical majesty of its theme and the patriotism of its motive, it loses in the eyes of the average reader by its surrender to the elaborated choric form. Few readers, anxious to get at the pith of the action and emotion, do justice to the leafage of strophe and antistrophe, or perceive that this classic framework is just the setting necessary to detach us from our modern prepossessions and give the Napoleonic monodrama the right light and focus. In these things it is clear that the public appreciates form as a vehicle or a vesture for a composition, but not as a superstructure. To the public, form is a matter of degree as much as shape, and the difficulty with them is to determine when there is form enough to please. Perhaps they will relish the true flavour of "The Dynasts" when time has mellowed its diction, with its curious admixture of matter-of-fact terms and poetic syntax. And we shall the better perceive its great dimensions when we have emerged from this present international assault, which is Napoleonic only in its rashness and its gluttony of power.

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Irony—and this is another respect in which "The Dynasts" marks a departure from the rest of Mr. Hardy's work—is not its keynote, whereas the present book of poems is a return to type in this respect. It fulfils its title by pursuing the line of mockery to a nobler end, that of distinction between shapes and realities, the false emotion and the true. Sometimes the satirical note is so dominant that the humanity of the author is masked, or at least his honesty is so unjust to itself that it leaves the nobler purpose to fare with the audience as best it can. Usually the medium is a duet or trio or quartet of figures (rarely more), but from what a field the subjects are drawn! Scripture, literature, history, archæology, travel, folk-lore, war, and that everlasting study of society and sex which obsesses the author of "Jude" and "Tess." The contradiction in woman's nature is a common theme—that enmity, or at best that armed neutrality, which is always waging between her proprieties and her emotions. Here and there it is a duel between revenge and beauty, as in "The Sacrilege"; more usually the interest lies in the subservience of everything to passion, or of passion to reputation and appearances. "In the Days of Crinoline," a poem fit to make women writhe, reminds us of nothing so much as "Max's" cartoon of the modern dame chiding her grandmother over certain disclosures in early Victorian memoirs. We get the irony of fame in "The Obliterate Tomb," and the irony of apostleship in "In the Servants' Quarters," a re-telling of St. Peter's recusancy in modern language, and an experiment which is only impaired by one's memory of the Gospel version.

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But it is not in its consistencies that this book achieves greatness so much as in the range and sureness of its artistry. Note the compression in the full and beautiful story of "The Abbey Mason"; or the memory-scene in "The Two Soldiers"; or the whimsical humours of "The Moon Looks In," with its quaint reminders of Hans Andersen. Read aloud "The Phantom Horsewoman" and observe the dexterity of the anapæsts, almost as perfect as Browning's "The Last Ride Together." Can any one living beat these four lines upon Henry VIII.?—

> "Ha-ha! I never would bow down to Rimmon,
> But I had a rare time with those six women!"
> "Not all at once?" gasped he who loved confession.
> "Nay, nay!" said Hal. "That would have been transgression."

Sometimes the satirical spirit is tickled merely with the clash of the tragic meaning against the lightness of the speech; or the way in which a love story is linked with the days of the week, and passes down the familiar names as the old movement that musicians call a passacaglia passes down the notes of the octave. The story in "The Satin Shoes" resembles that of the old-fashioned opera, "The Star of the North," but, Hardy-like, omits the happy ending. Every philosophic mind endorses this verdict on half a century of progress which occurs in a poetic greeting written for the jubilee of the "Cornhill":—

> But if we ask what has been done
> To unify the mortal lot
> Since your bright leaves first saw the sun,
>
> Beyond mechanic furtherance—what
> Advance can rightness, candour, claim?
> Truth bends abashed, and answers not.
>
> Despite your volume's gentle aim
> To straighten visions wry and wrong,
> Events jar onward much the same!

Here, again, the final note is honesty, as ever with this author, and it rests at the bottom of the phial like the grain of gold when all the clinging ore and the chemic helps have been purged away. When we think how he might have exalted the poetic office as embodied in himself, we cannot but admire the modesty that can challenge the generations thus:—

> But soon or later, when you hear
> That he has doffed this wrinkled gear,
> Some evening at the first star-ray,
> Come to his graveside, pause, and say:—
>
> "Whatever the message his to tell,
> Two thoughtful women loved him well."
> Stand and say that amid the dim:
> It will be praise enough for him.

***

Some day a critic might do worse than take Mr. Hardy's power of charging the single epithet with meaning and surprise and make it a text for some enlightening disquisition. What, after all, is his main characteristic as a poet? We fancy that most people would answer: his sterling reliance on the reader's ultimate judgment in favour of sense as against mere harmonies of sound. For this adhesion to a great principle we can forgive the occasions when a commonplace word or phrase is used to convey a simple and inevitable fact. As often as not, this seeming defect justifies itself because it seems the one expression that the poet, even with his amazing vocabulary, could not honestly escape. It is when, on laying the book down, we run our eyes over the contents, and realise the wealth of life and drama in tabloid form that is packed between a single pair of covers, that we see of what literature still is capable. And it is when we bethink ourselves that these are only the ocasional pieces and recreations of a man whose fame has long been secure by his prose alone that we learn something of the true measure and power of Thomas Hardy.

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All the same, it is impossible not to acknowledge Mr. Hardy's debt to Browning, in the example of a great courage applied to this very preferance of the dramatics to mere euphony and the accepted "laws" of poetry. Browning, like Beethoven, was of the order of genius which can brush the regulations aside and leave them to be reformulated while he forges ahead with the new material in hand. As Sir Frederick Kenyon, most wise and observant of his critics, reminds us, Browning followed a traceable course of self-development even in the minor matters of rhyme and metre, and cured himself of that staccato jerkiness which his wife detected and pointed out in his earlier lyrics. Sir Frederick noted this delicate perception and frankness of hers, and her husband's no less loyal acceptance of it, in the fine essay which he contributed to the "Cornhill" last year, and it fitly introduces the new poems which came to light at the Browning sale, and which the publishers have now put into a most acceptable volume. Even when we adjust our expectations according to the age at which they were written, these earlier things by our greatest pair of singers still demand high praise; and as for the later things—fugitive, votive, or otherwise—they could only have been thrown off by the hand of genius at a momentary loss for inspiration. There are Byron and Shelley echoes here and there; imperfect rhymes and indefensible audacities abound; and not infrequently the sweetnesses of Mrs. Browning return with all the old cloy and disappointment. But the richness of her sensibility appears on every page—that faculty of thought-in-tenderness which moved their boy when ill, and only eight years old, to try and change the sadness of his mother's face by saying:—

> Think it's a little boy in the street, and you won't feel so badly.

The editor has appended the notes that Mrs. Browning wrote upon her future husband's poems, and these are as self-revealing as anything in their wonderful correspondence. If these "new" poems do not surpass our expectations, we may fairly attribute it to the fact that the Brownings possessed so encouraging and considerate a publisher as the late George Smith, and this recollection helps us the better to appreciate the present volume, with its portraits and addenda, as a worthy pendant of the relations between a great pair of poets and a great house.

Western Morning News

Dec. 7. 1914

MR THOMAS HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

Most readers will probably derive the greatest enjoyment from the group entitled "Poems of 1912-13," which deal with that remoter part of Wessex on the wild Atlantic seaboard, which Mr Hardy has described in the preface to "A Pair of Blue Eyes" as pre-eminently (for one person at least) the region of dream and mystery." In these deeply touching, retrospective poems the personal note rings truly, and they have a special interest in that their scenes are associated with the romance of the author's early life. An indication of this is afforded in "A Dream or No," which opens thus:

> "Why go to Saint-Juliot? What's Juliot to me?
> I've been, but made fancy
> By some necromancy
> That much of my life claims the spot as its key."

The Westminster Gazette 19 Dec 1914

REVIEWS.

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

"Satires of Circumstance." By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 4s. 6d.

[Published this week.]

THE title of Mr. Hardy's new volume recalls some earlier ones—"Time's Laughing Stocks" and "Life's Little Ironies". We are again invited to contemplate the freaks of a Destiny whose caprice is the result of an immense indifference. We enter at once into a world where some small fit of passion—the misdating or tearing of a letter, or some silly error in the place or time of a tryst—determines the tragedy or comedy of human lives. Men and women have one in many chances of happiness in this world of Mr. Hardy—a world that lies between darkness before and after—and this one chance they may miss. We recall the great saying of the old English king, who likened the life of man to the flight of a bird, who from the cold and darkness flies for a moment through the open hall, flutters a moment in the light of the fire, and passes out again upon the hither side; and we recall it with this mental addition: that the swallow of Mr. Hardy's tale passes out often as not with wings burned or bruised.

Many have read into Mr. Hardy's poems and tales the malignant satisfaction of an evil spirit, enjoying the human comedy—its grievous miscarriages and pitiful frustration. We have never been sensible of this in Mr. Hardy. Rather we find in him the spirit which prompts the lovers of Browning's poem:

> "Let's contend no more, Love,
> Strive nor weep—
> All be as before, Love,
> —Only sleep!
>
> "What so wild as words are?
> —I and thou
> In debate, as birds are,
> Hawk on bough!
>
> "See the creature stalking
> While we speak—
> Hush and hide the talking,
> Cheek on cheek!"

We are all in the web, and our only remedy against an indifferent heaven is tenderness and patience with one another. Let not man's inhumanity—this seems to be the perpetual cry of Mr. Hardy's page—be added to the inhumanity of nature; or the life of man, nasty, brutish, and short, cannot be borne at all. Fate, like the hawk which hovered over Browning's creatures, warns us how foolish is the quarrelsome chatter of friends and lovers—warns us, too, how precious are the brief, warm days of life. These "Satires of Circumstance" are filled with regret for perished associations and opportunities. They lasted for a moment; were neglected or destroyed, and remembered ever after with regret. "The pity of it, Iago; the pity of it!" threads these "Satires" through and through. Mr. Hardy's cold nescience of all that comes before and after the lives of his people only makes their mortal contacts more warm and close. There is another consequence, too. In the presence of a Power which looks unmoved upon succeeding generations, life is necessarily reduced to an extreme simplicity. Mr. Hardy's tales are changes rung upon the themes of birth, marriage, death, the meeting and passing of lovers. Not half a dozen pages of this present book would remain were we to take out these elemental things. It is this more than anything else which distinguishes Mr. Hardy from his contemporaries. He has stood and lived apart from this clever and busy age, which handles all things and prys into the small detail of life. His work is essentially undated; and in that it is unlike the work of any living author.

The temptation to linger upon the larger aspects of Mr. Hardy's work is difficult to resist; but it would not be just to these poems to treat them as the mere occasion for a general discourse. There is some of Mr. Hardy's best verse in this last book. We are certainly not sensible of any faltering of his genius. Readers of the SATURDAY REVIEW will turn first, perhaps, to read again the incomparable "Ah, are you digging on my grave?"—terse, austerely beautiful, dragging so hard at the heart in the last stanza; or to the poem entitled "At the Drapers"—one of the grimmest and most deadly of these "Satires". We note that Mr. Hardy has changed his "The Plaint of Certain Spectres"—printed in this Review as a New Year message—to "Spectres that Grieve". We are proud to have had the privilege of publishing these poems in the first instance—as, indeed, we are proud altogether of our association with Mr. Hardy.

Quotation of Mr. Hardy's verse is difficult. He is not an author full of quotations. His intensely individual style, whether in prose or verse, seems to consist more than anything else in an ascetic indifference to surface excellence, to style, as style is consciously practised. His deliberate bleakness; his frequent challenge, bald and dissonant, to ears which love the prettiness of lesser men; his direct, abrupt grasp at the word which expresses his idea, irrespective of its syllabic harmony or its poetic respectability—these things, which in most writers would mean that they had no style at all, actually *are* the style of Mr. Hardy. In quoting Mr. Hardy it is well to take no account of verbal felicity, but to go straight for the idea. We would quote first of all a portion of the poem entitled "Channel Firing". It admirably illustrates the wide, simple view—the indifference to modern things, except in so far as they are also permanent. *Plus ça change* might be the motto of these verses:

> "That night your great guns, unawares,
> Shook all our coffins as we lay,
> And broke the chancel window-squares,
> We thought it was the Judgment-day,
>
> "And sat upright. While drearisome
> Arose the howl of wakened hounds;
> The mouse let fall the altar crumb,
> The worms drew back into the mounds.
>
> "The glebe cow drooled. Till God called, 'No;
> It's gunnery practice out at sea
> Just as before you went below;
> The world is as it used to be:—'"

The world is as it used to be; and, after life, there is rain upon a grave:

> "Clouds spout upon her
> Their waters amain
> In ruthless disdain,—
> Her who but lately
> Had shivered with pain
> As at a touch of dishonour
> If there had lit on her
> So coldly, so straightly
> Such arrows of rain.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> "Would that I lay there
> And she were housed here!
> Or better, together
> Were folded away there
> Exposed to one weather
> We both,—who would stay there
> When sunny the day there,
> Or evening was clear
> At the prime of the year".

Then comes the moral, as we find it, that, these things being so, we must cherish life and keep it warm—a moral discovered in our next quotation, taken because it illustrates the quoted reminiscence of Browning, which has so frequently haunted us in the reading of Thomas Hardy. This poem, "Tolerance", exactly shows how his terrible philosophy leads towards pity and love:

> "'It is a foolish thing', said I,
> 'To bear with such, and pass it by;
> Yet so I do, I know not why!
>
> "'And at each clash I would surmise
> That if I had acted otherwise
> I might have saved me many sighs.
>
> "'But now the only happiness
> In looking back that I possess—
> Whose lack would leave me comfortless—
>
> "'Is to remember I refrained
> From masteries I might have gained,
> And for my tolerance was disdained;'
>
> "For see, a tomb—"

PALL MALL

POETRY'S I
IRONIE

" Satires of Circumstance: with Miscellaneous Pieces." (London: Macmillan.) 4s. 6
" New Poems." By Robe
ing. (London: Smith, Elder

The point is worth n
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Irony—and this is a
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We will break the reading here, and quote just one other stanza to point further our impression. The most awful poem of this book shows to us a group of poor mothers squabbling over the common grave of their several children. It is the man of the cemetery who speaks:

"And then the main drain had to cross,
And we moved the lot some nights ago,
And packed them away in the general foss,
With hundreds more. But their folks don't know,
And as well cry over a new-laid drain
As anything else, to ease your pain".

We do not find in these lines a sneer at humanity's expense. We find, rather, a keen, distressed sense of the necessity for comfort and compassion.

cutting from The Academy

Nov. 28. 1914

Mr. Thomas Hardy's Unholy Joy

Satires of Circumstance. By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan and Co. 4s. 6d. net.)

A FEW months ago, in these columns, "Carneades, Jun.," pleaded with Mr. Thomas Hardy that future poems from him "should not deal wholly with death and disaster." Most of the "Lyrics, Reveries, and Miscellaneous Pieces," however, in this new collection are either hard, grim, and sprinkled with references to tombs, coffins, and graveyards, or deal with the peculiar, unstable happiness which is shattered by a word or a memory. Trifling things will set Mr. Hardy's muse weeping—a milliner's booklet, for instance:

And this gay-pictured, spring-time shout
Of Fashion, hails what lady proud?
Her who before last year was out
Was costumed in a shroud.

Morning Post. Dec 24. 1914

SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan and Co. 4s. 6d. net.

It is the fashion to define Mr. Hardy as a Greek pessimist, but nobody has yet really succeeded in justifying the definition. He is "Greek" because he never condescends to slovenly phrasing or sloppy sentimentality; he is a "pessimist" because he cannot accept the comfortable doctrine of a cheerful Hereafter and would probably smile ironically at M. Henri Bergson's gallant hope that humanity, having "real Time" for a mount, will eventually ride down Death. That is what the hack reviewer always says about Mr. Hardy; never having guessed that he is that most un-Greek thing, an anti-Romantic or purveyor of Romanticism *à rebours*, or that his pessimism is merely an inverted optimism. The Greeks had no conception of romance in the modern sense of the term; still less did they trample on the romantic with a romanticism of their own. And, if they did not believe that all is for the best in the best of possible worlds, they never believed that all is for the worst in the worst of impossible worlds. And none of them—not even Euripides, who has been so shockingly slandered in Professor Gilbert Murray's traitorous translations—ever went about pulling up their own and other people's emotions by the roots to see how they were growing, which is Mr. Hardy's strong suit, to use a convenient American colloquialism. If anybody doubts the truth of these assertions, let him try to translate into Greek any one of Mr. Hardy's so-called "Satires of Circumstance," which are really bleak little melodramas, Sardouesque mechanisms to be worn on a watch-chain, so to speak. Here is an example:

"My stick!" he says, and turns in the lane
To the house just left, whence a vixen voice
Comes out with the firelight through the pane,
And he sees within that the girl of his choice
Stands rating her mother with eyes aglare
For something said while he was there.

Let Professor Gilbert Murray re-write it in Greek iambics and read it to Euripides when they meet on Lethe Wharf—and may we be there to hear what Euripides leaves unsaid. We are much more likely to be made happily unhappy by some of the "Lyrics and Reveries," in the midst of which occur the so-called satires so trickily, so tediously. Indeed, it is a pleasure and a pang to read once more the famous lines on the loss of the *Titanic* (who that remembers them can doubt that Mr. Hardy is the strongest, if the narrowest, of our major poets?), and others not less familiar keep the old strange sense of "melancholy remembrances and vesperal," being full of weary truth and haggard beauty. There are no war poems worthy of this aching artistry in the volume; yet who is there, save the author of "The Dynasts," with the power and patience to fashion for posterity a sufficing symbol of this violet hour—this temple eternal and secular prison-house of the soul, which has for windows a nation's tears and a nation's years for doorways?

The Guardian

Jan 7 1915

THOMAS HARDY'S POEMS.

BY SIR FREDERICK WEDMORE.

SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE. By THOMAS HARDY. Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.

Among the volumes—and there are three or four of them—devoted to the shorter poems of Thomas Hardy—greatest by far of our living writers of fiction—I am disposed to think that the latest, "Satires of Circumstance," will take neither the last place nor the first. For myself, at least, I shall continue to class above it, as richer in consecutive thought and literary quality, "Time's Laughing Stocks"—a volume which, if, when it was published, Mr. Hardy's rank had not been of the highest already, should have sufficed to win for him an undisputed fame. The real Hardy is in that book, in very singular measure—his courage, his irony, his tolerance, his tenderness—and the larger scale of certain of the separate poems permits in it an exhibition of great constructive skill scarcely possible in "Satires of Circumstance." The new volume, however, with its immense variety of theme, if not of sentiment, affords ample evidence of fertility in invention; story after story is briefly but effectively hinted at, and abruptly and dexterously left. Here and there, too, in wonderful descriptive passages—in "The Sacrilege," "The Re-enactment," and other pieces—Mr. Hardy is seen as a swift sketcher of the country, a painter of wild and varied and impressive weather, a very Constable of Literature. But these descriptive passages are not, it seems to me, as numerous, and, it may be, have not quite the point and pregnancy so exceptionally noticeable in certain poems of "Time's Laughing Stocks"—if I may return to my own favourite.

Again, Mr. Hardy's view of human destiny—never at the best a cheerful one—tends to become in some instances almost gratuitously depressing, as, like the lover in his "To Meet, or Otherwise," he makes what seems to him "the most"—

"Of what remains to us amid this brake Cimmerian
Through which we grope, and from whose thorns we ache,
While still we scan
Round our frail, faltering progress for some path or plan."

I've been, but made fancy
By some necromancy
That much of my life claims the spot as its key."

It is in the "Fifteen Glimpses," as it entitles a certain section of the new volume, that Mr. Hardy packs, with unwearied energy, into the most compressed form, his presentations of human misadventure; but having noticed the force and ingenuity of the performance, I turn from these most clever little things to be better pleased on the whole, to be more seriously satisfied, by the group of poems, admirably intimate, which, having unmistakably a certain natural sequence, are placed together under the title "Poems of 1912 and 1913." The first of them, "The Going," is nothing less than tragic. "Places" is more lightly touching. And there are one or two that share a quality of seductive weirdness found perhaps more abundantly elsewhere.

Readers of Mr. Hardy's volume will have their own predilections and their particular disapprovals. The chosen contribution as a whole—just now at all events—will be the Postscript, "Men who march away." It is entirely worthy. It is that "song of the soldiers"—soldiers full of "faith and fire," who go "to hazards whence no tears can win them"—a song struck out of the heart of a patriot by a War one of whose happiest accidents has been that it has given us, along with many verses, a few great poems.

THE READER.

"The Bookman": Feb. 1915.

THE ART OF THOMAS HARDY.*

By Laurence Binyon.

" What of the faith and fire within us,
Men who march away,
Ere the barn-cocks say,
Night is growing grey ? "

WE cannot but be glad that the lines, which we read in *The Times* a month after the war began, came in time to close, as a " postscript," Mr. Hardy's last volume of poems. For their grave, haunting strain seems to well from a deeper, less conscious spring in the poet's mind, and the feeling with which they are full breathes a music into them which we often miss in his verse.

What is it sets a poet singing? The surcharge of emotion which issues in a lyric may spring from despair as well as joy, though with the outflow into music a kind of joy will come. The dejection in the thought of the lines that Shelley wrote on the sands near Naples could not cloud the radiance of the images that gathered in his speech, or check the melodious vehemence of his utterance; we feel that the impulse behind the lyric was something profounder than the ostensible stimulus. So one may perhaps wonder why Mr. Hardy, with his ingrained bleak convictions about life and the universe, should feel impelled to express himself in lyric form at all. What is the source of that energy which urges him to shape stanza after stanza of careful workmanship, marvels sometimes of concentrated effort, when the master-thoughts within them press out at the end so bitter a drop? Doubtless all deep sincerity has its own exuberance; its will is to expression; and Mr. Hardy is nothing if not sincere. We could wish, indeed, for poetry's sake, that he were less wholly consistent, that his moods were more variable. It seems as if he could rarely surrender himself to the moment's absorbing emotion; the steady conviction of life's irony is always there to dye the emotion with its tinge of rueful colour. Only now and again, as in that marching song, the sense of the goodness of effort in a cause gives an unwonted kindling to the verse; or the poignant illumination of memory, bringing back hours of joy and youth and laughter, and glorifying remembered haunts and places by " the wandering western sea," thrillingly vibrates through a cluster of little poems, deeply personal, which are intense with loss. Mr. Hardy is an artist, and has the artist's vivid sensitiveness to the inexhaustible beauties of earth and sky, in stable form and changeful colour; but he has also the artist's deeper power, the shaping instinct. And if we would understand these poems of a great artist's old age, we should perhaps refrain from asking why he seems so insistently, as with a morbid absorption in the theme, to harp on that familiar note of the implanted crookedness of things and the inbred malignity of chance. For most artists are haunted by some theme which it is their passion to express, and with the expression of which they are never satisfied. Painters are haunted by a type: and a Watteau or a Rossetti will spend themselves in drawing, over and over again, the same woman, whose last eluding charm seems ever to escape them, for all their weariless research in line and curve of neck and cheek and brow. " Life's Little Ironies," " Time's Laughing-stocks," " Satires of Circumstance "—the titles Mr. Hardy has chosen for tales or poems indicate the theme for which he seems to be always seeking to find the ultimate, most crystallised expression. In the group of poems which give their name to this volume he tries a severer condensation than any form yet found. Compared with the novels, they have the effect of little, deeply-bitten etchings beside large, elaborate paintings. The circumstances are various, the satire is the same. It is the satire, silent but profound, which the student of Bradshaw sometimes feels impelled to attribute to our railway-system, when planning a cross-country journey and finding the most admirable trains timed to miss the indispensable connection by just five minutes. In Mr. Hardy's world all the trains, one would think, are so timed. Or (to continue the image) it is just when the train has irrevocably started that the passenger realises that close to him is the vision of his heart's desire, the face and the form that call to him out of all the world, the "immer-geliebte," the " längst-verlorene,"—only she looks from the window of a carriage that is being borne away on the other line of rails, swiftly and irrevocably out of sight and reach. Yet there is nothing here of Heine's romantic sentiment with its sudden recoiling mockery; nor anything like Swift's " sæva indignatio "; it is rather the artist impersonally striving to mould his haunting theme into this shape or to that, with the utmost

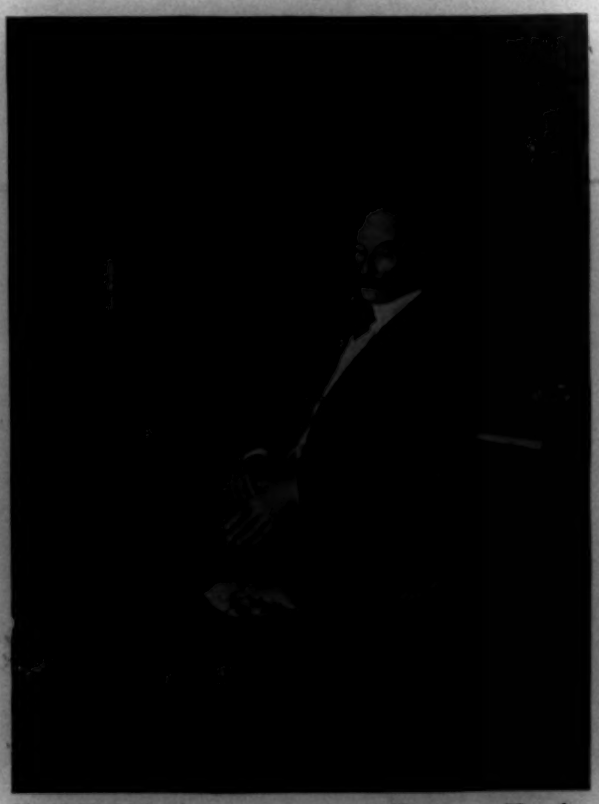

Photo by] E. O. Hoppé. **Thomas Hardy.**

* " Satires of Circumstance." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan). 4s. 6d. net.

suppression of irrelevance and ornament, the utmost economy of condensation. What reader of the Wessex novels has not noted their author's steady passion for the precise, the real epithet, at whatever sacrifice of superficial beauties of style? That long discipline in research of language persists in Mr. Hardy's verse. He is never seduced by sound; firm delineation, even in the shades and subtleties of feeling, is for him essential. The result is sometimes disconcerting; the mechanism of a stanza creaks and groans with the pressure of its working. There is something incongruous between the prosaic plainness of the speech and the tight structure of rather elaborate lyric form to which it is trimmed. The long "Conversation at Dawn" is a case in point. It is interesting to all of us who are admirers of Mr. Hardy's genius to watch him at such work; but it is hard to see the gain of a metre for such matters. This is not one of the "Satires," which are all short and pointed. And if some of this group of fifteen poems have a similar lack of inevitable form, a few are equally typical and masterly of their kind. Perhaps the most memorable is the last, "In the Moonlight," where a lonely workman stands and stares as in a dream at a grave, as if he would raise the soul of her who lay within it.

"Ah—she was the one you loved, no doubt,
Through good and evil, through rain and drought,
And when she passed, all your sun went out."
"Nay: she was the woman I did not love,
Whom all the others were ranked above,
Whom during her life I thought nothing of."

It is as if Giles Winterbourne had lived to gaze on the grave of Marty South. We are reminded of the novels again in the little piece, "Seen by the Waits," where a moonlit glimpse is caught of the "lonely manor-lady" airily dancing to the music in her room, thinking herself unseen—dancing for joy because news has come that her "roving husband" is dead. But in this, and far more in some other pieces, we are jarred by what seems a kind of callousness. Probably we should not feel this if Mr. Hardy had more of the singing-note of a Burns, a Heine, a Poe, whose music by its victorious energy can carry the horrible and ugly from the world of fact into the world of idea. Mr. Hardy's *macabre* stories are told so evenly and bluntly that we cannot bear that he should be so calm, and feel revolted. Horror, to be tolerable, needs a strong excitement; when we are in the thrilled state, the art that has played on our pulses can make its own joy of it. Mr. Hardy is not of "the tribe that feel in melodies," and we must take his art as it is. He will not relieve us by sheer beauty; but, oddly enough, some of these charnel pieces of which he is so fond procure us the relief of laughter. This at least is the effect of the singular little dialogue between the dead woman and the dog which scratches at her grave. Disappointed of her first fancy that it was her husband, or at least her kinsfolk, planting flowers there, she consoles her poor heart with the thought that her little dog at least was true to her; and is thus answered:

"Mistress, I dug upon your grave
To bury a bone, in case
I should be hungry near this spot,
When passing on my daily trot.
I am sorry, but I quite forgot
It was your resting-place."

Surely the comic triumphs here over the bitter and the grim!

But we should be unjust to Mr. Hardy if we did not recognise the tenderness that is very deep in the texture of his art, though it is as little obtruded as the courage of his outlook on this so bungled planet. How typical of him is the care for the "hurt, misrepresented names," to which history does no justice! He is haunted by the ghosts of these "spectres that grieve." One of the best poems in the book, a longish piece of admirable and easy narrative, "The Abbey Mason," is inspired by the same motive; it has an unwonted mellowness of tone. But still more intimately characteristic is the "Roman Graveyards." The poet watches a man with a spade and basket going to dig among "Rome's dim relics"; and he supposes him an antiquary, whose mind is filled with that Roman vastness still so towering in our imagination. But no, it is his little white cat that he is going to bury; the "small furred life" is more to him than all the glories of the Cæsars. And the mourner's mood "has a charm" for Mr. Hardy.

Athenæum. Nov. 28. 1914

Satires of Circumstance. By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan & Co., 4*s.* 6*d.* net.)

THE name 'Satires of Circumstance' is applied by Mr. Hardy in strictness to a series of fifteen pieces in this volume, in which he selects for poetic representation events or coincidences that show with poignant clearness the helplessness of human love, trust, hope, before the play of mechanical forces. One example will suffice. A drain has been constructed through a cemetery, necessitating the removal of a number of coffins; unaware of this, two mothers whose children have been buried in the same grave, now dismantled, dispute as to which of them has the right to lay flowers upon it. The sexton moralizes:—

As well cry over a new-laid drain
As anything else to ease your pain.

The idea—flavoured, we think, distinctly with embittered sentimentalism—is not confined to the poems specifically named; the Lyrics, Reveries, and Miscellaneous Pieces, of which the remainder of the volume is composed, are almost all in the same strain, and we are reminded that the central thought of Mr. Hardy's last volume, 'Time's Laughing Stocks,' was identical. The thought is so tenuous, if only by reason of its familiarity, that a lesser craftsman might well have despaired of presenting it effectively within the severe limits of high lyrical relief. Even Mr. Hardy is by no means uniformly successful; less so, we think, in this volume than in the last, perhaps because the moral, or want of moral, is now dwelt upon rather more heavily. However, in such poems as 'The Plaint to Man' and 'God's Funeral' the author finds scope for a larger, a more philosophic irony; we learn, too, that though he holds the foundations of deistic belief to have been finally undermined, he can still find some hope for the future of humanity:—

Still how to bear such loss I deemed
The insistent question for each animate mind,
And gazing, to my growing sight there seemed
A pale yet positive gleam low down behind....

too pale a gleam, alas! to be perceived by the mourners at the great funeral.

We gather that all, or nearly all, the pieces here collected have been written in the few years that have elapsed since 'Time's Laughing Stocks' appeared. Some of them we recall in the *Saturday Review* and elsewhere. A score of poems, dating from the year 1912–13, are thrown together in a section inscribed with the words "Veteris vestigia flammæ"—a compelling motto. Indeed, it is not without pride that we salute this fresh display of prowess from the Nestor of contemporary literature. Among incidental pieces a poem commemorating the death of Swinburne, one called forth by the loss of the Titanic, and the recently composed 'Marching Song for Kitchener's Army,' will be particularly remembered and re-read with pleasure.

The Westminster Gazette 19 Dec 1914

Reviews.

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

'Satires of Circumstance." By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.)

AN intelligent person who knew Mr. Hardy only from his fiction might be rather surprised at the sort of poetry he writes. There are two conspicuous elements in his novels which seem obviously likely to provide the right fuel for the intenser fires of poetry. They are, first, that metaphysical conception of the world as a whole which is more or less implied in the action of all his stories; and, secondly, the famous landscapes and the profound intimacy with the workings of Nature which surround the human events in the stories. These are the things which one would expect Mr. Hardy would have disengaged from his prose art for the finer elaboration and concentration of poetry. For they are things which essentially belong to poetry; fiction has only borrowed them from poetry, and, although Mr. Hardy's fiction is perhaps unequalled for the noble use it has made of the loan, the art of the novel can never hope to match itself with poetry in these matters. But what one may roughly call the humanity of Mr. Hardy's fiction is, of course, the very thing for which the art primarily exists. Fiction consoles itself for having to fall behind poetry in some things by developing incomparably easier and more tempting ways of dealing with humanity; and this is what one would have expected Mr. Hardy to leave behind when he decided to forsake fiction for poetry.

But our intelligent person, on taking up Mr. Hardy's poetry, would find these plausible predictions pretty flatly contradicted. This is true, at least, of his lyrical poetry. Perhaps it is because, in "The Dynasts," he disengaged so completely the metaphysic implicit in his novels, and worked it up into such a monumental shape—into, in fact, one of the greatest of modern poems; perhaps it is because of this that his lyrical poetry has shown so little tendency to essentialize and volatilize, in the way one might have expected, his characteristic philosophy. There are, to be sure, several early poems of his which attempt something like this; but they are of doubtful success, and the tendency has been more and more to take the philosophy for granted, to refer to it in subdued hints, which we might scarcely notice if we were not already familiar with Mr. Hardy's attitude. And the same holds, too, for his feeling for landscape and the life of the earth. It is a feeling which often seems, in his novels, to be just on the point to fly off into poetry; and yet, when Mr. Hardy comes to give his genius up to poetry, we find that this feeling—again with a few exceptions, mainly among the earlier poems—is much less important than it is in the novels. In fact, the elements in Mr. Hardy's inspiration which seem most likely to demand poetic utterance are just those which he has made least use of in his poetry. Instead, he has fashioned for himself—not without noticeable hammering and difficult forging—a style of poetry for dealing in another way with the staple of his fiction; indeed, for distilling it down to sheer, unmixed essence of human character, will, and passion.

In his latest volume of poems, the tendency is about as completely successful as it could be. His metaphysic and his landscape (to use terms of convenience rather than of precision) could not, of course, be entirely eliminated; but "Satires of Circumstance" has less of these elements in it, and is more singly concerned with pure human nature (for the most part, tragic human nature) than any other of his poetry. The familiar metaphysic does, indeed, make one quite undisguised and quite magnificent appearance in "The Convergence of the Twain," a philosophic dirge for the loss of the "Titanic." Both the mood and the phrasing of this unmistakably recall the spirit of "The Dynasts" and the later novels:—

> "Well: while was fashioning
> This creature of cleaving wing,
> The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything
> Prepared a sinister mate
> For her—so gaily great—
> A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.
>
> And as the smart ship grew
> In stature, grace, and hue,
> In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too."

But that kind of poetry—which might be paralleled, though scarcely matched, among the earlier poems—is altogether the exception here. There is very little of this metaphysical mood, even in the diluted form of a comprehensive irony; though in this form it again makes one decidedly happy appearance—in "Channel Firing." The dead wake up at the sound of gun practice, which they mistake for Judgment Day; but the Deity assures them that the world is still a long way from Judgment Day, if, indeed, Judgment Day had not better be indefinitely postponed, since men show not the least sign of improvement:—

> "And many a skeleton shook his head.
> 'Instead of preaching forty year,'
> My neighbor Parson Thirdly said,
> 'I wish I had stuck to pipes and beer!'"

There is even, in the admirable "Song of the Soldiers," which is perhaps the best poem the war has inspired, something which looks like a contradiction of Mr. Hardy's customary philosophy:—

> "Is it a purblind prank, O think you,
> Friend with the musing eye,
> Who watch us stepping by
> With doubt and dolorous sigh?
> Can much pondering so hoodwink you?
> * * * * *
> "In our heart of hearts believing
> Victory crowns the just,
> And that braggarts must
> Surely bite the dust,
> Press we to the field, ungrieving."

It certainly seems, just there, as if "Victory crowns the just" in Mr. Hardy's heart of hearts, too; which is by no means what the mood of "The Dynasts" would assent to.

As for his profound faculty for realizing landscape and the life of Nature, so dear to Mr. Hardy's admirers, it is allowed to accomplish here nothing but a few decorative touches. These, to be sure, are on the whole extremely fine; for vividness and economy, nothing, for instance, could be better than this:—

> "She answered not, but lay listlessly
> With her dark, dry eyes on the coppery sea,
> That now and then
> Flung its lazy flounce at the neighboring quay."

Commonly, these allusions to Nature serve merely to enforce the special quality of some entirely human transaction, as in the poem which begins with a reference to—

> "the boom
> Of the ocean, *like a hammering in a hollow tomb*";

a phrase instinct with sinister imagination exactly right for the spectral tragedy which it introduces. But always in these poems the human event is the main thing; and, as a rule, sheer human nature is the only thing the poem is made of.

The chief quality in these poems is, more than ever before in Mr. Hardy's poetry, their concentration. Nothing is too trivial or too commonplace for their art. One feels that a hundred times a day one might be supplying subjects for Mr. Hardy's Muse; it is a flattering delusion, though not so far from the truth. A single trait or a single incident is seized and compressed into strictest artistic form, and described in language which disguises, in a sort of nonchalance, an intense pre-occupation with essentials of motive and significance, though it does not always disguise (as Mr. Gibson's apparent carelessness invariably does) an exact sense of the poetic values in words. The series of short poems which gives the book its title, the "Satires of Circumstance" themselves, are more characteristic than anything else of Mr. Hardy's completed poetic method. Here is one which may stand as a type; a Greek would have called it an epigram:—

> "'My stick!' he says, and turns in the lane
> To the house just left, whence a vixen voice
> Comes out with the fire-light through the pane;
> And he sees within that the girl of his choice
> Stands rating her mother, with eyes aglare,
> For something said while he was there.
>
> "'At last I behold her soul undraped!'
> Thinks the man who had loved her more than himself;
> 'My God!—'tis but narrowly I have escaped.
> My precious porcelain proves it Delf.'
> His face has reddened like one ashamed,
> And he steals off, leaving his stick unclaimed."

It seems almost casual; but there is not a single word that does not tell in the whole effect, and the effect is (in twelve lines) the quintessence of two human lives. It was, indeed, worth waiting for, this final poetic method of Mr. Hardy's. It is a method entirely his own. Its limitations and oddities could not, perhaps, have been passed over during its composition by any other poet; but that is probably because of Mr. Hardy's single-minded determination to perfect the virtue his poetry now seems always to have aimed at; to reveal in inescapable suggestion (scarcely ever deducing in open terms) the essential tragic significance of some moment of human nature through sheer intense, abrupt description, concentrated into rigorous formality, of some such event as a dog scratching on a woman's grave, a parson posturing before a mirror, or a woman concealing a gay hat under her crinoline. The kind of thing described is usually familiar, if not to experience, certainly to quite humdrum fancy. The result of the description is always astonishing; and to that result has gone a specialized skill unlike anything else in our literature.

cutting from The Outlook

Jan 2 1915

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE. By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.

THE *Satires of Circumstance*, "in fifteen glimpses," occupy no more than as many pages in Mr. Hardy's new volume, but these pages form a high table-land, as it were, on which we breathe an air strangely thin and rarefied, and from which the incidents in the life below are seen with an intense particularity. Mr. Hardy is a dramatic poet, and merely to set out the subjects of these fifteen things seen with such a masterly clarity is to mark the course which all the stream of his verse has taken. The preacher is caught in the vestry repeating with satisfaction before the glass the gestures with which he has just moved so many hearts in the pulpit; a girl and her lover spend in pleasure the savings with which she had been entrusted to put up a headstone; a group of mothers is seen disputing the ownership of a grave, and the sexton remarks that it is nothing but the new main drain they are quarrelling over, since all the bodies in that part of the cemetery have been moved in the night; a man turns back for his stick and hears his beloved storming at her mother; the air of the town band which comes in at the window of the nuptial chamber is the air to which the bride last danced with her real love, and it is his memory she embraces even while her arms are about her husband; another husband steps into a draper's shop in time to hear his wife ordering the very smartest kind of mourning, in view of his expected demise; the two women whom a man has loved stand over his coffin, and the true wife wishes she had made less of her claim, for then the three of them might have been happily living. And so on. Each of the fifteen is but one more of "life's little ironies"—those objective arrangements of human life by a passionless fate which set our poet's pen in motion. As the sexton remarked of the mothers disputing where to place their flowers—

> As well cry over a new-laid drain
> As anything else, to ease your pain!

Thus the present volume is a work fully characteristic of Mr. Hardy, a necessary complement for the bookshelves of those who have the *Wessex Poems*, the *Poems of the Past and Present*, and *Time's Laughingstocks* in a place of honour there already. The same note will be heard in the Lyrics and Reveries, in which section of the book the most remarkable poems are "The Face at the Casement" and "Ah! Are you digging on my grave?" The first is as dramatic as Wordsworth's "Strange fits of passion have I known"; but where Wordsworth made a poem out of the remembrance of a baseless apprehension, Mr. Hardy is not contented unless the ironic spirit brings the wheel full circle. The poem is one of his unforgettable effects of objective vision faintly tinged with malice. In the second poem a dead body speaks; she exhausts the possibilities of those who may be carefully tending the earth above her grave until her little dog speaks and says it is himself. This verse the elder poet might have written:

> Ah, yes! *You* dig upon my grave. . .
> Why flashed it not on me
> That one true heart was left behind!
> What feeling do we ever find
> To equal among human-kind
> A dog's fidelity!

But the next, and last, Wordsworth would not have written; that is purely Mr. Hardy's:

> Mistress, *I* dug upon your grave
> To bury a bone, in case
> I should be hungry near this spot
> When passing on my daily trot.
> I am sorry, but I quite forgot
> It was your resting-place.

And that perhaps is the nearest thing to humour in this volume which is so largely concerned with the earth that fills graveyards.

In one case—"The Newcomer's Wife"—it is the sea that receives the man who learns through the door of a liquor-bar that his wife is not what he thought her:

> That night there was the splash of a fall
> Over the slimy harbour-wall:
> They searched, and at the deepest place
> Found him with crabs upon his face.

That story, like another called "The Cheval Glass," is a little masterpiece of compressed narrative. Story or poem, both are one to Mr. Hardy.

Do not let it be suggested then that Mr. Hardy's poems are not good reading at this time or at any other. In what we have termed dramatic interest (not because of the part sudden death plays in them, but for the intensity of their illuminated action) they are second to no poet's. Faults of diction there still are—or let us call them idiosyncrasies rather. The use of a "learned" word where a "popular" would have been expected still surprises. Ratiocination sometimes elbows rhythm. But a volume of Mr. Hardy's verse, so strong is the artist's mind that made it, is a volume that can be read through at a sitting; and there is no decline in the powers that shaped the work herein collected. Two or three of the poems are already known, such as that on the *Titanic*, and that song of the marching soldiers which is the best poem of the present war and a ballad worthy to go by the side of Mr. Hardy's own "Valenciennes."

Great Thoughts

Feb. 6 1915

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

"Satires of Circumstance: Lyrics and Reveries" (Macmillan, 4s. 6d. net), remind us that our veteran novelist is also a poet of no mean order. One or two of the pieces in this new volume, "The Sacrilege," for instance, and "The Abbey Mason," will live in our literature, and the very last in the volume, "[illegible] what was at once relevant and true. I have been much pleased with a couple of poems on Scripture subjects—one on "Peter's Denial," and the other on a working man in the British Museum, gazing on a marble pillar that has been brought from the Areopagus in Athens, and reflecting that "that stone has echoed the voice of Paul."

By some necromancy
That much of my life claims the spot as its key."

The Westminster Gazette. 19 Dec 1914

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.

"Satires of Circumstance: Lyrics and Reveries." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan and Co.) 4s. 6d. net.

In theme and form and technique a large majority of all four divisions of Mr. Hardy's new volume of poems exhibit an intimate relationship with those of his previous volume, "Time's Laughing-Stocks." They are intensely characteristic, and utterly removed from any poetic kinship of our time. In not a few of these succinct and impressive lyrics we have the *idée mère* of some Wessex tale. Such are the fifteen poems called "Satires of Circumstance." These are styled "glimpses." But they tell too much. Compression becomes almost crudeness in some. In others we have what may be called dramatised epigrams. We feel that if transmuted to prose the epigram would be well lost in the immeasurable gain of the dramatic action of a short story. The ironies of life find piquant or grotesque illustration in many of the poems. Others tell of some barren or melancholy epilogue of love; bitter, perfidious, dreary. Some of the most powerful lyrics in the collection deal with some dark and wayward destiny—weaving tragic circumstance of some light unconsidered word, or of some phrase unspoken which might if uttered have averted tragedy. Laments for the past there are, the happy years and the "temps perdu"—not as in Béranger's famous song of remembered joy, but full of the unappeasable pain of irrevocable doom. Striking are some of the poet's musical illustrations on the theme:

Forget the dead, the past? Ah, yet
There are ghosts that may take revenge for it.

And in Mr. Hardy's poems the haunted is magically presented as something as ghostly as the haunter. "The Re-enactment" is a masterly example of this magic art; not to be quoted here, for every one of its three-and-twenty stanzas contributes essentially to the impressive effect. Less complex is "The Voice":

Woman much missed, how you call to me, call to me,
Saying that now you are not as you were
When you had changed from the one who was all to me,
But as at first, when our day was fair.

Can it be you that I hear? Let me view you then,
Standing as when I drew near to the town
Where you would wait for me; yes, as I knew you then,
Even to the original air-blue gown!

Or is it only the breeze in its listlessness
Travelling across the wet mead to me here,
You being ever consigned to existlessness,
Heard no more again far or near?

Thus I; faltering forward,
Leaves around me falling,
Wind oozing thin through the thorn from norward,
And the woman calling.

"After a Journey," a poem that tells of one who revisits past scenes of delight filled with a ghostly presence, has a more pleasing close than several of its companions. Perhaps "The Phantom Horsewoman" is as characteristic as any of the series:

I.

Queer are the ways of a man I know:
He comes and stands
In a careworn craze,
And looks at the sands
And the seaward haze,
With moveless hands
And face and gaze,
Then turns to go . . .
And what does he see that he gazes so?

IV.

A ghost-girl rider. And though, toil-tried,
He withers daily,
Time touches her not,
But she still rides gaily
In his rapt thought
On that shagged and shaly
Atlantic spot,
And as when first eyed
Draws rein and sings to the swing of the tide.

With this poem may be compared, or contrasted, the charming picture in "Beeny Cliff," the joyous and resonant note of which scarcely needs the somewhat obvious pathos of the final stanzas, which we do not quote:

O the opal and the sapphire of that wandering western sea,
And the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping free—
The woman whom I loved so, and who loyally loved me.

The pale mews plained below us, and the waves seemed far away
In a nether sky, engrossed in saying their ceaseless babbling say,
As we laughed light-heartedly aloft on that clear-aired March day.

A little cloud then cloaked us, and there flew an inland rain,
And the Atlantic dyed its levels with a dull misfeatured stain,
And then the sun burst out again, and purples prinked the stain.

Space does not avail to exemplify the variety of the poems in this collection that may be considered eminently characteristic of the author. Poems so quaint in their simplicity as "The Moon Looks In," or "I rose up as my custom is," for example, form a class apart. "A Conversation at Dawn," again, with its cumulative effect, insidious yet fateful, is a masterpiece that may well baffle analysis. In "The Sacrilege" Mr. Hardy shows once more his command of the qualities that go to the making of the ballad. Both in form and spirit this is a striking example. But in "The Abbey Mason" he has produced a poem, unlike any other in the volume, which we account among the most notable of his achievements in verse. This poem in rhymed couplets sets forth the story of the nameless inventor of Perpendicular architecture. It is told with admirable art, not as some mediæval legend, but with such persuasive circumstance and imaginative insight we seem to have a true record of discovery. The poet has handled the technical aspect of the theme with remarkable skill. The subject is one that naturally appeals to Mr. Hardy. It is an additional happy circumstance that we owe to a poet of the West Country, where "Perpendicular" is represented so richly, this notable and truly original poem.

Truth Dec. 16 1914

Mr. Hardy's New Volume

The postscript of Thomas Hardy's new volume of verse, "Satires of Circumstance" (Macmillan and Co., 4s. 6d.), would by itself make this volume the most important contribution to poetry that the season has seen, even were it not for some of the lyrics in the earlier part of the book which attain to the highest level of the Dorset poet's sombre art. There is a martial lilt about the "Men who march away," but its rhythm is that of the tired tramp of footsore feet—its fanfare is not of trumpets and fifes, but rather the breath of sighs coming from grieved souls awed by the approach of that little terror from which every Wessex man has prayed the good God, week by week, in his village church, to deliver him. It is beyond comparison the war poem *par excellence* that England has produced in these days. A large proportion of the lyrics in the book deal with death, and Hardy sees the phenomenon in its starkest form. He paints it with a touch of the macabre that recalls to memory the childish horror one used to feel before musty monuments or luscious-looking grass-grown graves. Of the mothers squabbling over a little nameless mound in a village cemetery the sexton is made to remark:

And as well cry over a new-laid drain
As anything else to ease your pain.

How true the philosophy and how simple and vivid a form it takes in the poet's mind! The simplicity of the subjects that inspire Hardy's art is the salient characteristic of his work. The carpenter bringing to his wife a workbox fashioned out of the wood left over from one John Wayward's coffin, is surprised at the shrinking that greets his gift, until he recollects that his wife and John Wayward were natives of the same village. He strives to apologise for his clumsy effort to please:

Yet still her lips were limp and wan,
Her face still held aside,
As if she'd known not only John,
But known of what he died.

Nov. 28th, 1914.] COUNTRY LIFE. 719

LITERATURE.

A BOOK OF THE WEEK.

MR. THOMAS HARDY'S poetry has more "body" than that of any contemporary. It has thought, imagination and ideas. Occasionally his sombre and cynical muse gets the better of his judgment, but even when he errs there is food for thought in the error. The most perfect achievements in his latest volume, *Satires of Circumstance* (Macmillan), are those poems which approach the folk ballad in their leading characteristics, and among them "The Sacrilege" stands easily first. In the direct narration, the absence of fine writing and the masterly handling of its burden, it might have come from one of the nameless authors of the famed Border Ballads. The tale is a tragedy of wandering hucksters and tinkers as they were in the twenties of last century. A gipsy siren promises herself and her charms to a lover on condition that he will steal some Church plate

to buy me jewels fine
And richly jewelled rings.

He boasts of petty larcenies done to buy ribbons for her, but has a superstitious aversion to robbing churches, yet urged on by his desire he ultimately consents, attempts the robbery and gets

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...ete. And the gloom is
...e of diction.
LYTTON STRACHEY.

...That is all; the desolation is complete.
not even relieved by a little elegance of d...

You dig upon my grave . . .
Why flashed it not on me
That one true heart was left behind
What feeling do we ever find
To equal among human kind
A dog's fidelity?

...And so, with this comforting conclusion, the poem might
...ave ended. But that is not Mr. Hardy's way.
..."Mistress," comes the reply:

"stretched," but not before causing his brother to take an oath to avenge him if she should take up with his rival, Wrestler Joe. Her unfaith to the dead lover brings about the catastrophe.

I dogged her, crying: "Across that plank
They use as bridge to reach yon bank
A coat and hat lie limp and dank;
Your goodman's, can they be?"

She paled, and went, I close behind—
And Exon frowned to Dunkery Tor,
She went, and I came up behind
And tipped the plank that bore
Her, fleetly flitting across to eye
What such might bode. She slid awry;
And from the current came a cry,
A gurgle; and no more.

How that befell no mortal knew
From Marlbury Downs to Exon Moor;
No mortal knew that deed undue
But he who schemed the crime,
Which night still covers. . . . But in dream
Those ropes of hair upon the stream
He sees, and he will hear that scream
Until his judgment-time.

Mr. Masefield's method involves the most lavish use of imagery and ornament and an elaborate "working up" of the material. Hardy uses the fewest and simplest phrases, and makes us feel the grey sadness of the theme chiefly by the low chanting music of his verse with its refrain like the sound of a wind from distant hills—"while Dunkery frowned on Exon Moor." Of the same class but more dramatic and grim is "A Conversation at Dawn." We will not attempt to summarise the story, but be content to quote the last verse for the lovely employment of the word flounce:

She answered not, but lay listlessly
With her dark dry eyes on the coppery sea,
That now and then
Flung its lazy flounce at the neighbouring quay.

With the "Satires of Circumstance" that give a name to the volume we have not so much sympathy. They are more of "life's little ironies," and the cynicism is strained and often unjustified. As an example, we select one not included in the series. We quote the first three verses:

"Ah, are you digging on my grave
My loved one?—planting rue?"
"No: yesterday he went to wed
One of the brightest wealth has bred.
'It cannot hurt her now,' he said,
'That I should not be true.'"

"Then who is digging on my grave?
My nearest dearest kin?"
"Ah, no; they sit and think, 'What use!
What good will planting flowers produce?
No tendance of her mound can loose
Her spirit from Death's gin.'"

"But someone digs upon my grave?
My enemy?—prodding sly?"
"Nay: when she heard you had passed the Gate
That shuts on all flesh soon or late,
She thought you no more worth her hate,
And cares not where you lie."

Here is, indeed, the grave, "under us silent" as Job and Homer and Goethe realised it; but the rest is as grotesque as "the ebon box" which George Herbert introduced after one of the greatest passages on death ever written. The sombre beauty of the lines is ruined by the cynical explanation that a once favourite dog is searching for a bone it has buried there.

Mr. Hardy's architectural leanings are exemplified in two of his best pieces. We quote from a description of church restoration, that emphasises what has been often said in our columns:

And many years slid by,
And active church-restorers cast their eye
Upon the ancient garth and hoary building
The tomb stood nigh.

And when they had scraped each wall,
Pulled out the stately pews, and smartened all,
"It will be well," declared the spruce churchwarden,
"To overhaul

"And broaden this path where shown;
Nothing prevents it but an old tombstone
Pertaining to a family forgotten,
Of deeds unknown.

"Their names can scarce be read,
Depend on't, all who care for them are dead."
So went the tomb, whose shards were as path-paving
Distributed.

"The Abbey Mason" is a noble tribute to the nameless genius who invented the Perpendicular style of Gothic architecture. On coming to "the transept part" in building Gloucester Cathedral he had been reduced to despair by the difficulty of finding something to replace an architecture of which he said: "This long-vogued style is quite outworn." Inspiration came to him one morning of frost after rain, while he was gazing at his drawing-board.

He closelier looked; then looked again:
The chalk-scratched draught-board faced the rain,

Whose icicled drops deformed the lines
Innumerous of his lame designs,

So that they streamed in small white threads
From the upper segments to the heads

Of arcs below, uniting them
Each by a stalactitic stem.

—At once, with eyes that struck out sparks,
He adds accessory cusping-marks,

Then laughs aloud. The thing was done
So long assayed from sun to sun. . . .

It was the beginning of a new epoch in the art, but the newborn pride was scourged out of him by the Abbott.

"'Surely the hand of God it is
That conjured so, and only His!'"—

His fame was forgotten, and after "dank death had wormed the brain" that had conceived it,

From Gloucester church it flew afar—
The style called Perpendicular.—

To Winton and to Westminster
It ranged, and grew still beautifuller:

From Solway Frith to Dover Strand
Its fascinations starred the land,

Not only on cathedral walls
But upon courts and castle halls,

Till every edifice in the isle
Was patterned to no other style,

And till, long having played its part,
The curtain fell on Gothic art.

The poem ends with a fine description of Gloucester Cathedral. The reader is advised to

seek the quoin
Where choir and transept interjoin,

And, gazing at the forms there flung
Against the sky by one unsung—

The ogee arches transom-topped,
The tracery-stalks by spandrels stopped,

Petrified lacework—lightly lined
On ancient massiveness behind—

Muse that some minds so modest be
As to renounce fame's fairest fee.

It is not, however, the architecture, but the soul of the artist that concerns the poet. The tragedy is that the great and the modest are forgotten,

While others boom a baseless claim
And upon nothing rear a name.

There is much else belonging to this "Friend with the musing eye" on which we had hoped to comment, for the Gleam he follows lights upon many a quiet recess, many a bright parterre, many a secluded and fair enclosure and also many a dark unlovely spot in that great garden, Humanity; but the door stands open, and no interpreter is really needed!

EDUCATING THE PARTY.

The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, Earl of Beaconsfield, by William Flavelle Monypenny and George Earle Buckle. Volume III., 1846—1855. (John Murray.)

OPPOSITE the first page of Mr. Buckle's preface is printed a brief but not inadequate tribute to the author of the first two volumes. It is from a mural tablet in Farnham Royal Church, and the inscription is a model of what such compositions should be. Mr. Monypenny's career was rich in performance, richer yet in promise. But while fully alive to his merits, we cannot

MR. HARDY'S LATER POEMS.*

In this volume Mr. Hardy has collected the poems written for the most part in the last five years or so, a considerable number of which have been published separately. As they are the utterances of a man of seventy suffering from a recent bereavement, it is not to be wondered at that the prevailing tone should be autumnal and elegiac. It is only on the last two pages of the volume, in the song of the soldiers, "Men who march away," that the note of hopefulness revives:—

"In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just,
And that braggarts must
Surely bite the dust,
Press we to the field ungrieving
In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just.

Hence the faith and fire within us
Men who march away
Ere the barn-cocks say
Night is growing gray,
To hazards whence no tears can win us;
Hence the faith and fire within us,
Men who march away."

Elsewhere in the volume we look in vain for evidences of "faith and fire"—save the embers of the past. There is a vein of tender regret in the group of poems dated 1912-1913 under the motto *Veteris vestigia flammae*, but it is shot through with bitterness. The scenes and pleasures of the past have not lost their savour, but they are always contrasted with the barrenness of the present to one "to whom to-day is beneaped and stale, and its urgent clack but a vapid tale," whose "sand is sinking," and who will "traverse love's domain never again." The word "nevermore" sounds like a sombre ground bass throughout the book. Love can supply "one note" to the "one long sweeping symphony from times remote till now, of human tenderness . . . as part of sick Life's antidote," but it is "small and untraced," and the burden of these poems is the sickness rather than the soundness of life. The lovers of whom Mr. Hardy sings are mostly those *quos durus Amor crudeli tabe peredit*, for whom the eternal question was "by whose strange laws That which mattered most could not be." His past is haunted by "spectres that grieve," "slighted visitants," like the wife whose grave is only visited by her pet dog, not out of fidelity, but simply to bury a bone in case it should be hungry near the spot. Women as portrayed in these dismal and sardonic "satires of circumstance" are either frail or forced into loveless marriages. Their husbands are either befooled, or brutalized by their awakening to the truth. In about half a dozen poems the awakening comes about by the wife's confession, and leads to estrangement, misery, or vengeance. Or, as a variant, we have the enlightenment of a week-old husband by overhearing scraps of conversation at a "lively liquor bar," with the gruesome sequel:—

"That night there was the splash of a fall
Over the slimy harbour-wall:
They searched, and at the deepest place
Found him with crabs upon his face."

It is a relief to turn from these sinister studies of married wretchedness to such a tribute as that which Mr. Hardy pays in sonnet form to the memory of Leslie Stephen:—

"The Schreckhorn.

Aloof, as if a thing of mood and whim;
Now that its spare and desolate figure gleams
Upon my nearing vision, less it seems
A looming Alp-height than a guise of him
Who scaled its horn with ventured life and limb,
Drawn on by vague imaginings, maybe,
Of semblance to his personality
In its quaint glooms, keen lights, and rugged trim.

At his last change, when Life's dull coils unwind,
Will he, in old love, hitherward escape,
And the eternal essence of his mind
Enter this silent adamantine shape,
And his low voicing haunt its slipping snows
When dawn that calls the climber dyes them rose?"

The homage to Swinburne, "A Singer Asleep," is more unequal in execution, but has some fine stanzas:—

"—It was as though a garland of red roses
Had fallen about the hood of some smug nun
When irresponsibly dropped as from the sun,
In fulth of numbers freaked with musical closes,
Upon Victoria's formal middle time
His leaves of rhythm and rhyme.

. . . . . !

—His singing-mistress verily was no other
Than she the Lesbian, she the music-mother
Of all the tribe that feel in melodies;
Who leapt, love-anguished, from the Leucadian steep
Into the rambling world-encircling deep
Which hides her where none sees."

The lines on the loss of the 'Titanic,' "The Convergence of the Twain"—the great liner and her "sinister mate" the iceberg—have a curious interest apart from their intrinsic merit, because they express with a condensed force characteristic of the writer the same idea which inspired a poem on similar lines written many years ago by an American author. As an example of Mr. Hardy in the mellower vein of elegy, we may quote the beautiful lines "Regret not me," which the curious student of contrasts may compare with a famous lyric by Christina Rossetti:—

"Regret not me;
Beneath the sunny tree
I lie uncaring, slumbering peacefully.

Swift as the light
I flew my faery flight;
Ecstatically I moved, and feared no night.

I did not know
That heydays fade and go,
But deemed that what was would be always so.

I skipped at morn
Between the yellowing corn,
Thinking it good and glorious to be born.

I ran at eves
Among the piled-up sheaves,
Dreaming 'I grieve not, therefore nothing grieves.'

Now soon will come
The apple, pear, and plum
And hives will sing, and autumn insects hum.

Again you will fare
To cider-makings rare,
And junketings; but I shall not be there.

Yet gaily sing
Until the pewter ring
Those songs we sang when we went gipsying.

And lightly dance
Some triple-timed romance
In coupled figures, and forget mischance;

And mourn not me
Beneath the yellowing tree;
For I shall mind not, slumbering peacefully."

There are many other poems which call for notice: macabre and cadaverous imaginings such as the musings of the skeletons in a church on the Channel coast or of the dead Kings at Westminster at the Coronation; or the modernized version of Peter's interview with the guards before the cock crew, which produces an effect akin to that of some modern French pictures; or the strange fantasy entitled "God's Funeral," in which the shattering of faith is described in a parable by one whose unbelief is no source of arrogance or intellectual pride. He pictures the long procession of disillusioned mourners following the bier, and ends on a note of perplexity:—

"I could not prop their faith: and yet
Many I had known: with all I sympathized;
And though struck speechless, I did not forget
That what was mourned for, I, too, once had prized.

Still, how to bear such loss I deemed
The insistent question for each animate mind,
And gazing, to my growing sight there seemed
A pale yet positive gleam low down behind,

Whereof, to lift the general night,
A certain few who stood aloof had said,
'See you upon the horizon that small light—
Swelling somewhat?' Each mourner shook his head.

And they composed a crowd of whom
Some were right good, and many nigh the best. . . .
Thus dazed and puzzled 'twixt the gleam and gloom
Mechanically I followed with the rest."

Viewed in relation to his predecessors and contemporaries, Mr. Hardy is a strangely isolated figure. His poetry is eminently his own, but it is not "a poor thing." He "standeth alone," but not "as the nightingale sings," for the element of charm and melody is so intermittent as to be negligible. His technique is often halting and clumsy and his style lacking in distinction. One encounters stretches of prose twisted into lengths of verse, ponderous Latin polysyllables, journalistic epithets such as "insistent," ugly forms such as "boundenly." His handling of rhythm and rhyme suggests a stubborn conquest rather than an easy victory. Yet he has at least this justification for adopting the medium of verse, that he says what he means with a force and concentration unattainable in prose. He is not a singer, or a consoler, or a prophet; he stands with his back to the future, immersed in tragic retrospect, directing with an unerring aim the searchlight of his sombre genius on the "soul-sick blight" of poor humanity "struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

* *Satires of Circumstance: Lyrics and Reveries, with Miscellaneous Pieces.* By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan and Co. [4s. 6d. net.]

cutting from The Daily News

Nov. 21 1914

THE POET OF DISILLUSION.

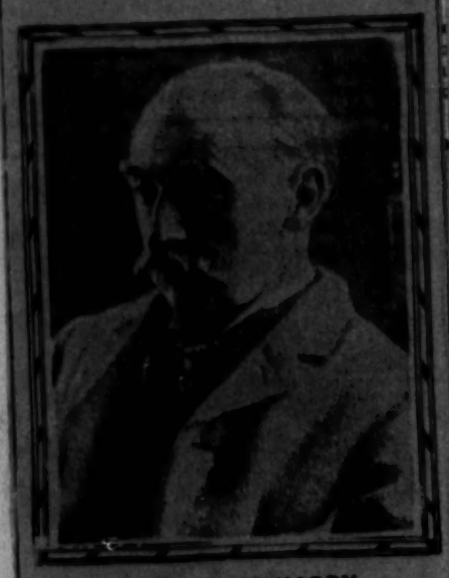
MR. HARDY'S NEW BOOK.

"Satires of Circumstance." Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 4s 6d.

By A. G. G.

It is necessary, I said, to escape if only momentarily from this intolerable shadow that eclipse the light of day and darkens all our thoughts. And as the shortest way of escape I turned to the new books and found among them a volume of poems by Thomas Hardy. Now a new book by Thomas Hardy has always the magic of old memories. It recalls that distant day when I discovered Tranter Dewey and the Melstock choir and started off with them through the snow on their immortal carollings.

I have never forsaken their company since. I know old William Dewey and the Tranter and Mr. Penney and young Jimmy to whom "clar'nets was—miserable sinners" and Thomas Leaf, who was "silly by nater but a' excellent tribble" and all the merry company with an intimacy with which I never hope to know the phantoms I meet in daily life. And from those beginnings I have widened my Wessex circle of friendships and have



MR. THOMAS HARDY.

become so absorbed in them that it sometimes seems that I have a parallel existence to that of the flesh—a sort of disembodied existence that is passed in Melstock and Yalbury Wood, on Egdon Heath and Blackmore Vale. I must confess that the friends have become less cheerful as the years have gone by, that the old carollings have turned to dirges, and that, contrary to the leading case in "Hamlet," the wedding-feast furnishes forth little but funeral baked meats. But merry or sad there is that about this Wessex world—a sincerity, a beauty, a breath of the earth, a greatness of sky, greater because it is always the night sky—that holds me prisoner. And so, when I see a new book by the creator of that world, I find in its incantations a momentary forgetfulness even of the war.

The Blasted Heath.

And yet to turn for relief from the war to "Satires of Circumstance" can only be justified on the doctrine of *similia similibus curantur*. In the presence of this unmitigated picture of the irony, futility and tragedy of life, even war is a relatively cheerful subject, for it does at least furnish a means of release from an intolerable prison. Into that prison there come no more gleams of the old gaiety, none even of the robust spirit that makes "The Bombs of Valenciennes" one of the greatest ballads in the language. The poet no longer sees the sun: he lives by moonlight on the blasted heath. His thoughts are of graves and epitaphs, of broken hopes and disillusioned lives. The starlings that come to build in the roof bring no message of spring but only an ironic comment on the human search for happiness. New voices come up from the rooms below, for the old inhabitants have gone. Why did they go?

"They look for a new life, rich and strange;
They do not know that, let them range
Wherever they may, they will get no change.

"They will drag their house-gear ever so far
In their search for a home no miseries mar;
They will find that as they were they are,

"That every hearth has a ghost, alack,
And can be but the scene of a bivouac
Till they move perforce—no time to pack!"

All is Vanity.

Sometimes there is a touch of bitterness that turns a noble satire to farce, as in the case of "Ah, are you digging on my grave?"

"Ah, are you digging on my grave
My loved one?—planting rue?"
—"No: yesterday he went to wed
One of the brightest wealth has bred.
'It cannot hurt her now,' he said,
'That I should not be true.'"

"Then who is digging on my grave?
My nearest dearest kin?"
—"Ah, no; they sit and think, 'What use!
What good will planting flowers produce?
No tendance of her mound can loose
Her spirit from Death's gin.'"

"But some one digs upon my grave?
My enemy?—prodding sly?"
—"Nay: when she heard you had passed the Gate
That shuts on all flesh soon or late,
She thought you no more worth her hate,
And cares not where you lie."

It is the dog that finally answers the question, and from the grave there come words of gratitude that "one true heart is left behind." But even this modest alleviation of the world's selfishness is denied, for the dog is only burying a bone! In the sequence of short poems which give the title to the volume the theme is always the faithlessness of life—of the priest to his precept, the lover to his mistress, the child to the parent. Thus, in "By her aunt's grave":

"Sixpence a week," says the girl to her lover,
"Aunt used to bring me, for she could confide
In me alone, she vowed. 'Twas to cover
The cost of her headstone when she died.
And that was a year ago last June;
I've not yet fixed it. But I must soon."

"And where is the money now, my dear?"
"O, snug in my purse . . . Aunt was so slow
In saving it—eighty weeks, or near."

"Let's spend it," he hints. "For she won't know
There's a dance to-night at the Load of Hay."
She passively nods. And they go that way

The tragic circumstances that his perceptions read into the thing perceived are the only food of his fancy. Two unhappy looking people whom he sees by lamplight "walking slowly, whispering sadly," fill him with melancholy speculation

The pair seemed lovers, yet absorbed
In mental scenes no longer orbed
By love's young rays. Each countenance
As it slowly, as it sadly
Caught the lamplight's yellow glance
Held in suspense a misery
At things which had been or might be

When I retrod that watery way
Some hours beyond the droop of day,
Still I found pacing there the twain
Just as slowly, just as sadly,
Heedless of the night and rain
One could but wonder who they were
And what wild woe detained them there

Thirty years pass, but still in his mind's eye he sees

Moving slowly, moving sadly
That mysterious tragic pair,

and when nights are weird and wet his thought returns to the lonely lane, the lamplight and the unknown strangers whose unknown sorrow (if it was sorrow) has probably been forgotten by them these thirty years. This subjective misery makes him dwell lonely with his own Past:

We two are home, the Past and I
The Past and I:
I mended while it hovered nigh,
Leaving me never alone.

Or it drives him out to the solitary beacons where "I mark where I was before my birth, and after death must be." Throughout the book there is this poignant personal note and it is that which makes it so rich in the pure stuff of poetry, for if, as Wordsworth says, poetry is emotion remembered in tranquillity, few men have had the gift in a more liberal measure than Thomas Hardy. Sometimes his vocabulary seems a little warped and strange, as of one wrestling to put his thought in an unfamiliar medium; but even in this there is a quality of individuality, a certain primitive and original force that mounts with the occasion and at its best produces an effect of Gothic beauty not easily matched. It is so in that fine poem on the loss of the Titanic, "The Convergence of the Twain," and in many of the tales, for Mr. Hardy's verse impinges on his prose themes and often suggests a novel in little.

Facing Facts.

I have spoken of Mr. Hardy as the poet of disillusion, for he himself would deny that he is a pessimist. His point of view is very much that of the author of "A Shropshire Lad" who defended the gloom of his muse by the allegory of the Eastern King who, to guard against the poisoned meats and drinks of his Court, made himself immune by careful doses of poison:

They put arsenic in his meat
And stared aghast to watch him eat;
They poured strychnine in his cup,
And shook to see him drink it up.

It was the poisoners who were poisoned. "Mithridates, he died old." Mr. Hardy might offer the same allegory. He would claim that a courageous facing of the facts of life as one perceives them is the only way to a reasoned peace, independent alike of the anodynes of pleasure or of superstition. The ultimate basis of his philosophy may perhaps be realised by reading that remarkable poem "God's Funeral," and with it the "Plaint to Man." In the former he sees a slow procession moving across the twilit plain, and bearing a strange and mystic form, that seems now man-like and anon to change to an amorphous cloud of marvellous size. He draws near and hears the plaint of the mourners lamenting the being whom they have created and can no longer keep alive.

"Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,
We gave him justice as the ages rolled
Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,
And longsuffering, and mercies manifold."

But Time destroys "the Monarch of our fashioning" and the mourners follow their myth's oblivion, "sadlier than those who wept in Babylon" and lamenting the days of simple faith:

"How sweet it was in years far hied
To start the wheels of day with trustful prayer,
To lie down liegely at the eventide
And feel a blest assurance he was there!"

Whither now, they ask, shall they turn their distracted eyes? And some refuse to believe that all is over. But the poet cannot prop their faith, though he too once shared it. To his growing sight however there seems a pale yet positive gleam afar off, and some who stand aloof cry "See you upon the horizon that small light—swelling somewhat?" But the mourners shake their heads and go on their way and "dazed and puzzled 'twixt the gleam and gloom" the poet follows sadly with the rest.

"The Pale Gleam."

Now what is the pale gleam on the horizon? The answer to that seems to be in "A Plaint to Man" which opens:

When you slowly emerged from the den of Time,
And gained percipience as you grew,
And fleshed you fair out of shapeless slime,

Wherefore, O Man, did there come to you
The unhappy need of creating me—
A form like your own—for praying to?

* * *

One thin as a shape on a lantern-slide
Shown forth in the dark upon some dim sheet,
And by none but its showman vivified.

And goes on with an appeal to man to face the true fact of life:

The fact of life with dependence placed
On the human heart's resource alone,
In brotherhood bonded close, and graced

With loving-kindness fully blown,
And visioned help unsought, unknown.

But facing the fact does not make for cheerful poetry and I think there is still need in this sad world for the jolly choristers with whom we used to go carolling in the old days. They were not disillusioned, but they were very happy.

Country Life. 28:11:1914

While fully endorsing the high praise given to Mr. Hardy's new volume in our literary section, may we respectfully suggest that in a new edition a glossary should be printed? Many of the strange looking vocables are in reality old words that for the time being have passed out of circulation. On page 9 "the glebe cow drools." The dictionary says "drool" is a contracted form of drivel, but we confess having been driven to consult it. In "The Obliterate Tomb" "the phantoms of the ensepulchred"! "hollowly hackered." How weirdly suggestive is "hackered"! But how many readers know that it means stuttered? In "The Year's Awakening" reference is made to "a tinct of spring"—an unusual but expressive phrase that carried its meaning on its face, and it has Shakespearean authority. "Existlessness" in "The Voice" was probably coined to rhyme with "listlessness." A word frequently employed is "chasmal." Of course, its relationship to chasm is obvious; but it is an ugly vocable with little authority to recommend it. In the tenderest of all the poems, that entitled "Places," and significantly dated "Plynmouth, March, 1913," occurs the phrase, "to-day is beneaped and stale." The rare word "beneaped," meaning left aground by the neap tide, is used with exquisite appropriateness, which is not at first recognised because the syllables are so unfamiliar. It is easy to understand "enghosted" walls, but the word appears to be an invention.

New Statesman. 19 Dec. 1914

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS*

MR. HARDY'S new volume of poems is a very interesting, and in some ways a baffling book, which may be recommended particularly to æsthetic theorists and to those dogmatic persons who, ever since the days of Confucius, have laid down definitions upon the function and nature of poetry. The dictum of Confucius is less well known than it ought to be. "Read poetry, oh my children!" he said, "for it will teach you the divine truths of filial affection, patriotism, and natural history." Here the Chinese sage expressed, with the engaging frankness of his nation, a view of poetry implicitly held by that long succession of earnest critics for whom the real justification of any work of art lies in the edifying nature of the lessons which it instils. Such generalisations upon poetry would be more satisfactory if it were not for the poets. One can never make sure of that inconvenient and unreliable race. The remark of Confucius, for instance, which, one feels, must have been written with a prophetic eye upon the works of Wordsworth, seems absurdly inapplicable to the works of Keats. Then there is Milton's famous "simple, sensuous, and passionate" test—a test which serves admirably for Keats, but which seems in an odd way to exclude the complicated style, the severe temper, and the remote imaginations of Milton himself. Yet another school insists upon the necessity of a certain technical accomplishment; beauty is for them, as it was—in a somewhat different connection—for Herbert Spencer, a "*sine qua non.*" Harmony of sound, mastery of rhythm, the exact and exquisite employment of words—in these things, they declare, lies the very soul of poetry, and without them the noblest thoughts and the finest feelings will never rise above the level of tolerable verse. This is the theory which Mr. Hardy's volume seems especially designed to disprove. It is full of poetry; and yet it is also full of ugly and cumbrous expressions, clumsy metres, and flat, prosaic turns of speech. To take a few random examples, in the second of the following lines cacophony is incarnate:

> Dear ghost, in the past did you ever find
> Me one whom consequence influenced much?

A curious mixture of the contorted and the jog-trot appears in such a line as:

> And adumbrates too therewith our unexpected troublous case;

while a line like:

> And the daytime talk of the Roman investigations

trails along in the manner of an undistinguished phrase in prose. Even Mr. Hardy's grammar is not impeccable. He speaks of one,

> whom, anon,
> My great deeds done,
> Will be mine alway.

And his vocabulary, though in general it is rich and apt, has occasional significant lapses, as, for instance, in the elegy on Swinburne, where, in the middle of a passage deliberately tuned to a pitch of lyrical resonance not to be found elsewhere in the volume, there occurs the horrid hybrid "naïvely"—a neologism exactly calculated, one would suppose, to make the classic author of *Atalanta* turn in his grave.

It is important to observe such characteristics, because, in Mr. Hardy's case, they are not merely superficial and occasional blemishes; they are in reality an essential ingredient in the very essence of his work. The originality of his poetry lies in the fact that it bears everywhere upon it the impress of a master of prose fiction. Just as the great seventeenth-century writers of prose, such as Sir Thomas Browne and Jeremy Taylor, managed to fill their sentences with the splendour and passion of poetry, while still preserving the texture of an essentially prose style, so Mr. Hardy, by a contrary process, has brought the realism and sobriety of prose into the service of his poetry. The result is a product of a kind very difficult to parallel in our literature. Browning, no doubt, in his intimate and reflective moods—in *By the Fireside* or *Any Wife to Any Husband*—sometimes comes near it; but the full-blooded and romantic optimism of Browning's temper offers a singular contrast to the repressed melancholy of Mr. Hardy's. Browning was too adventurous to be content for long with the plain facts of ordinary existence; he was far more at home with the curiosities and the excitements of life; but what gives Mr. Hardy's poems their unique flavour is precisely their utter lack of romanticism, their common, undecorated presentments of things. They are, in fact, modern as no other poems are. The author of *Jude the Obscure* speaks in them, but with the concentration, the intensity, the subtle disturbing force of poetry. And he speaks; he does not sing. Or rather, he talks—in the quiet voice of a modern man or woman, who finds it difficult, as modern men and women do, to put into words exactly what is in the mind. He is incorrect; but then how unreal and artificial a thing is correctness! He fumbles; but it is that very fumbling that brings him so near to ourselves. In that "me one whom consequence influenced much," does not one seem to catch the very accent of hesitating and half-ironical affection? And in the drab rhythm of that "daytime talk of the Roman investigations," does not all the dreariness of long hours of boredom lie compressed? And who does not feel the perplexity, the discomfort, and the dim agitation in that clumsy collection of vocables—"And adumbrates too therewith our unexpected troublous case"? What a relief such uncertainties and inexpressivenesses are after the delicate exactitudes of our more polished poets! And how mysterious and potent are the forces of inspiration and sincerity! All the taste, all the scholarship, all the art of the Poet Laureate seem only to end in something that is admirable, perhaps, something that is wonderful, but something that is irremediably remote and cold; while the flat, undistinguished poetry of Mr. Hardy has found out the secret of touching our marrow-bones.

It is not only in its style and feeling that this poetry reveals the novelist; it is also in its subject-matter. Many of the poems—and in particular the remarkable group of "fifteen glimpses" which gives its title to the volume—consist of compressed dramatic narratives, of central episodes of passion and circumstance, depicted with extraordinary vividness. A flashlight is turned for a moment upon some scene or upon some character, and in that moment the tragedies of whole lives and the long fatalities of human relationships seem to stand revealed:

> My stick! he says, and turns in the lane
> To the house just left, whence a vixen voice
> Comes out with the firelight through the pane,
> And he sees within that the girl of his choice
> Stands rating her mother with eyes aglare
> For something said while he was there.
>
> "At last I behold her soul undraped!"
> Thinks the man who had loved her more than himself. . . .

It is easy to imagine the scene as the turning-point in a realistic psychological novel; and, indeed, a novelist in want of plots or incidents might well be tempted to appropriate some of the marvellously pregnant suggestions with which this book is crowded. Among these sketches the longest and most elaborate is the *Conversation at Dawn*, which contains in its few pages the matter of an entire novel—a remorseless and terrible novel of modern life. Perhaps the most gruesome is *At the Draper's*, in which a dying man tells his wife how he saw her in a shop, unperceived:

> You were viewing some lovely things. "*Soon required*
> *For a widow, of latest fashion*";
> And I knew 'twould upset you to meet the man
> Who had to be cold and ashen
>
> And screwed in a box before they could dress you
> "*In the last new note of mourning,*"
> As they defined it. So, not to distress you,
> I left you to your adorning.

As these extracts indicate, the prevailing mood in this volume—as in Mr. Hardy's later novels—is not a cheerful one. And, in the more reflective and personal pieces, the melancholy is if anything yet more intense. It is the melancholy of regretful recollection, of bitter speculation, of immortal longings unsatisfied; it is the melancholy of one who has suffered, in Gibbon's poignant phrase, "the abridgment of hope." Mortality, and the cruelties of time, and the ironic irrevocability of things—these are the themes upon which Mr. Hardy has chosen to weave his grave and moving variations. If there is joy in these pages, it is joy that is long since dead; and if there are smiles, they are sardonical. The sentimentalist will find very little comfort among them. Sometimes, perhaps, his hopes will rise a little—for the sentimentalist is a hopeful creature; but they will soon be dashed. "Who is digging on my grave?" asks the dead woman, who has been forgotten by her lover and her kinsfolk and even her enemy; since it is none of these, who can it be?

> O it is I, my mistress dear,
> Your little dog, who still lives near,
> And much I hope my movements here
> Have not disturbed your rest.

"Ah, yes!" murmurs the ghost:

> You dig upon my grave . . .
> Why flashed it not on me
> That one true heart was left behind
> What feeling do we ever find
> To equal among human kind
> A dog's fidelity?

And so, with this comforting conclusion, the poem might have ended. But that is not Mr. Hardy's way. "Mistress," comes the reply:

> I dug upon your grave
> To bury a bone, in case
> I should be hungry near this spot
> When passing on my daily trot,
> I am sorry, but I quite forgot
> It was your resting-place.

That is all; the desolation is complete. And the gloom is not even relieved by a little elegance of diction.

LYTTON STRACHEY.

* *Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and Reveries, Pieces.* By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 4s. 6d.

Oxford Chronicle, 4 Dec. 1914
Published at 120, High Street, Oxford.

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.*

"Mind-chains," runs a line of one of these verses, do not clank where one's next neighbour is the sky." The clanking of mind-chains is the sound which strikes along Mr. Hardy's poetry. Its appeal is intellectual and rare, its intention not appeasement but outrage, in effect it leaves wounds not salved but salted. In this latest volume Mr. Hardy has deepened his philosophy, has intensified the outraged attitude into which he has been struck by "Earth's ingrained conditions." If he personifies life it is in a person who is sick, upon Time's face is a smile of derision, man and woman are "predestined sorrowers," the years tearers of all sweet things, change only repetition of elusive dances in front of the eternal quest:

They look for a new life, rich and strange,
They do not know that, let them range
Wherever they may, they will get no change.
They will drag their house-gear ever so far
In their search for a home no miseries mar;
They will find that as they were they are.

That every hearth has a ghost, alack,
And can be but the scene of a bivouac
Till they move perforce—no time to pack.

In the fifteen "Satires of Circumstance" Mr. Hardy condenses and concentrates the contempt-tale. These episodes, set in sordid pantomime, reveal the dark vision darkening, more scornful the scorning mouth. Of Rubens' "Triumph of Silenus" Coleridge said every part is pregnant with libidinous nature without one spark of the grace of heaven. Such is the destitution of these Satires of Circumstance, but while they cause the shoulder to shudder they force—since Mr. Hardy is the poet of memory and experience—the head to assent. And narrative poems of length, "The Face at the Casement," "A Conversation at Dawn," enforce Mr. Hardy's grim findings of humanity:

I'm a practical man and want no tears:
You've made a fool of me, it appears:
That you don't again
Is a lesson I'll teach you in future years.
Even should you fly to his arms, I'll damn
Opinion and fetch you; treat as sham
Your mutinous kicks
And whip you home. That's the sort I am.

But even Mr. Hardy opposes gloom to gloom: and mixed with things slimed and spectral, grotesque and bleared, is poetry sounded from poetry's three consecrated notes—"sweet, sad, sublime." Mr. Hardy makes music of the Wessex names:

Does there even a place like Saint Juliot exist?
Or a Dalbeney Valley
With stream and leafed alley
Or Beeny, or Boe, with its flounce-flinging mist?

and when Swinburne is his subject is a poet just for poetry's sake. In his latest volume, too, he shows himself once more supreme in his touch of a girl, of cheeks fair in their flush-time, of things "beyond a man's saying sweet." "Under the Waterfall" recalls inevitably a confession of Stevenson, and "The Schreckhorn," in a fine piece of imagery, hazards Leslie Stephen, the Alpinist, back to his Alps:

At his last change, when Life's dull coils unwind,
Will he, in old love, hitherward escape,
And the eternal essence of his mind
Enter this silent adamantine shape,
And his low voicing haunt its slipping snows
When dawn that calls the climber dyes them rose?

There remain the poems of personal philosophy and faith, re-affirmations of the old denials, even re-appreciation of the old perception:

Our making soon our maker did we deem,
And what we had imagined we believed.

If Mr. Hardy is relentless towards illusion, from his face human imagining can draw smiles for its courage as well as tears for its pathos. If, too, he projects in t day, perhaps in most, of these poems a humanity debased, we have glimpses of humanity at great exaltation, inasmuch as Mr. Hardy abstracts omnipotence from the sky to lay it upon the hands of man.

The truth should be told and the fact be faced:
That had best been faced in earlier years.

. . . . . .

The fact of life with dependance placed
On the human heart's resource alone,
In brotherhood bonded close and graced
With loving kindness fully blown,
And visioned help, unsought, unknown.

G.M.A.

* Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and Reveries, with Miscellaneous Pieces. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan and Co. 4s. 6d. net.

The Globe 26 Jan 1914

HARDY AS TRAGEDIAN.

If tragedy be the only true art, then Thomas Hardy is our premier poetic artist. In "Satires of Circumstance," published by Macmillan, he places life upon the operating table, and, with an uncannily skilful knife, lays it bare to the public gaze, a shuddering, trembling mass of [illegible] nerves, inexpressibly vile and [illegible] is all there in such simple [illegible] is magnified a

the Fleathunker
Dated December 12 1914.

Fresh Fruit from an Old Tree.

"In our fat England the gardener, Time, is playing all sorts of delicate freaks in the hues and traceries of the flower of life, and shall we not note them?"—GEORGE MEREDITH.

AMONG modern English writers whose fame would seem to be assured, Mr. Thomas Hardy occupies the foremost place, and it is pleasant to reflect that he is an "intellectual." Indeed, the attentive reader cannot fail to notice the essential Freethought embedded in his admirable books. Even in the earlier stories, amid their picturesque color, their delightful atmosphere, their delicious pastoral scents and sounds, we find a frank Secularism. As the author advances in reputation and grows in intellectual power, the note has deepened, until, in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, it grows into a cry of defiance, and afterwards, in *Jude the Obscure*, a great sob of pain. These two books are noble and significant works, worthy in every way of this great living English author. They are an arraignment of Providence, and as we read we recall the words of the blinded Gloster in the greatest of all tragedies:—

"As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods;
They kill us for their sport."

It is a further proof of Mr. Hardy's genius that he has achieved success in poetry no less than in prose, and as he gets older he turns more and more readily to the muses, and writes with all the zest and enthusiasm as if he were a young poet beginning his career instead of a veteran who has enriched the literature of his country with masterpieces of poetry and prose for two generations. And Mr. Hardy has the Shakespearean quality of unlocking his heart in his verse. We do not for a moment underrate the novels. These remain, by virtue of the author's genius, among the finest literary works of our time. In the poems, however, we have Mr. Hardy's own passion, and, so packed with emotion are the verses, that, instead of having worked on the book, the author has worked straight on us. He defies, like Whitman, our æsthetics, and proves that the greatest thoughts are just those which are quickest dismembered and absorbed by the reader, and turned into part of himself.

To open Mr. Hardy's new volume of poems, *Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and Reveries*, is to be confronted with a book of singular power and one full of the pure stuff of poetry. Rarely has anyone combined with such poetic gifts as the author possesses, the keen and subtle intellect of the philosopher. His highest poetry arises from the combined action of two faculties, often separated widely, for he has the power of vision and the power of understanding. Take, for example, that fine and imaginative poem, "God's Funeral." The author pictures a slow procession moving across a plain at twilight, and bearing a strange form, that seems now appearing man-like, and then seeming cloud-like. He listens to the lament of the mourners for the being they have themselves created, and whom they cannot any longer keep alive:—

"Framing him jealous, fierce, at first,
We gave him justice as the ages rolled.
Will to bless those by circumstance accurst,
And long suffering and mercies manifold."

"Sadlier than those who wept in Babylon" follow the mourners, and some of them refuse to believe that all is over; and, "dazed and puzzled twixt the gleam and gloom," the scene closes. It is a daring piece of work, comparable to Heine's vision of a dying god having the last sacraments of the Church administered to him, albeit there is none of the bitter irony of the German singer.

Mr. Hardy has other melodies, strange and alluring as a linnet's song in the pauses of the wind. Listen:—

"Yes, I accompany him to places
Only dreamers know,
Where the shy hares show their faces,
Where the night rooks go;
Into old aisles where the past is all to him,
Close as his shade can do,
Always lacking the power to call to him,
Near as I reach thereto."

In still another mood the poet sings:—

"We two kept house, the Past and I,
The Past and I;
I tended while it hovered nigh,
Leaving me never alone."

Sometimes there is a touch of regret, as in the lines:—

"Every hearth has a ghost, alack,
And can be but the scene of a bivouac
Till they move perforce—no time to pack."

Contemporary literature is so sugary, so full of romantic imaginings, that such writing brings a sense of largeness; a reminder of the great winds and waters and wide horizons of the West Country, where men and women know how to live and how to die, not submissively but fiercely. Modern drawing-room readers of poetry are ill-prepared for Mr. Hardy's virile verse, and primly straighten themselves as his muse passes. They are a little afraid of Mr. Hardy's plainness of speech, his probity, and his emphatic gestures. But others there are who perceive the beauty of fact which underlies his stern verses, and understand the distinction conferred on English literature by the writings of a rare poet who is also a philosopher.

In these verses of an alert and capacious mind the world, however, is not all immitigable gloom, and the poet's mood is sane enough. His advice to us is to face the facts of life, and to trust humanity:—

"The fact of life with dependence placed
On the human heart's resource alone,
In brotherhood bonded close, and graced
With loving-kindness fully blown,
And visioned help unsought, unknown."

These vivid verses bring out with admirable clarity an aspect of the world which, though often overlooked in the hurry of modern life, challenges the consideration of all lovers of literature, for their author is among the select few who, among the many writers of to-day, are likely to challenge the verdict of posterity.

MIMNERMUS.

Daily Telegraph Dec 2 1914

By W. L. COURTNEY.

SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE.

(MACMILLAN. 4s 6d.)

By calling his new volume of poems "Satires of Circumstance," Mr. Thomas Hardy draws pointed attention to the least pleasing aspect of his work. The actual Satires of Circumstance, fifteen in number, are some of the bitterest things that were ever penned, cynical little pictures of depravity and turpitude, etched in with considerable power, and acidly mordant in their general effect. A girl takes the money which her aunt had collected for her own funeral, and spends it with her young man at a public-house; two mothers are quarrelling over the graves of their children, in entire ignorance of the fact that the bodies had been removed to make a new drain; a man discovers on his wedding night how entirely the heart of his wife is possessed by earlier memories of a lost love; the hypocrisy of a clergyman, with his postures and grimaces, is revealed to a pupil in his Bible class—and so on through a series of sordid commentaries on the least creditable of our motives and impulses. Or, again, in precisely the same spirit—though not, as a matter of fact, included in the Satires of Circumstance—there is a poem in which a dead woman recognises with joy that someone at all events remembers her, for the ground over her tomb is disturbed. Is it a friend, or a relative, or a lover? No, it is a dog; yet even the dog is not inspired with any fidelity of remembrance, for he had buried a bone just there and forgotten that it was his mistress's resting-place. All these things are very bitter, and, in their constant repetition, I may also add wearisome. Just as Christina Rossetti once said in a pessimistic mood that "hope is really fear seen on the sunny side," so poems like these indicate the other side of a strangely sensitive emotional soul, deeply touched with pity for life, and pity for all who live; a man in whom sensitiveness has proved the portal to the blackest despair.

ODES AND BALLADS.

Mr. Hardy, however, has hardly done himself justice by letting his satiric title cover all the contents of his book. There are pieces here of a different order—odes and ballads, lyrics of various kinds, and a sonnet in memory of Leslie Stephen full of a sculptural dignity which proves how much the author could have done in this direction if he had only cared to try. There is always something wistful and tender, even in the lightest poems. A man keeps company with his past, for instance, "We two kept house, the Past and I," and finds a certain solace in this companionship. Finally, he discovers the memory of it fading, and he is disconsolate. The past had become "a far-off skeleton" instead of "a comrade nigh," and he mourns the overwhelming solitude. Or, in another mood, the poet roams over some heights in Wessex, "shaped as if by a kindly hand for thinking, dreaming, dying on." That is the congenial spot on which he loves to wander. He has no

Manchester Guardian Feb 2 1915

SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE. By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan and Co. Pp. ix. 230. 4s. 6d. net.

It is not unusual for novelists to write poetry (commonly it is "verse") as a sort of recreation from the main affair; occasionally, as in Meredith's case, there may be parallel and equally important self-expression in fiction and in poetry. But Mr. Hardy, as novelist-poet, is exceptional; for when he took seriously to poetry he was really opening a new career. Many people have regretted that his fiction should, apparently, have come so definitely to an end with "Jude the Obscure"; and it was supposed, not very sensibly perhaps, that the Wessex novels had their terminus in that great book merely on account of the silly, momentary outcry it aroused. But, in truth, if we look at the whole series of Mr. Hardy's novels as a continuous line of artistic development, it seems unmistakable that the line ends with "Jude the Obscure" for very much the same reason as a tragedy or symphony ends where it does: a certain process has been completely developed, worked out, brought to shapely conclusion. And Mr. Hardy, we may guess, knows his business too profoundly to carry the process beyond artistic finality. Some other medium would have to be used if his creative energy needed further activity. Having had his say out in fiction, having exhausted all the possibilities in it which were appropriate to his idiosyncrasy, he must make another art obey his mind—by making his mind obey another art. Some of his poetry was written while he was still a novelist; and it is pretty plain in it that his mind had not then quite learned exact obedience to the poetic art. Indeed, even now, when Mr. Hardy obeys the peculiar requirements of poetry implicitly and completely, it is still often an awkward and shuffling obedience. But as soon as the novelist altogether yielded to the poet, as soon as his obedience to the new art was undivided, we saw a remarkable and thoroughly individual development of poetry; for poetry, in its turn, began implicitly to obey Mr. Hardy's peculiar commands. And now, in "Satires of Circumstance," poetry does pretty well what Mr. Hardy wants it to do. There is still room for improvement in suavity and neatness; but the precise specialisation of poetry suggested in the earlier verses has now been carried a good way on towards perfection. You may not like it; it is brusque and harsh and ironic. But it gets its effects without a word wasted; it can concentrate a piece of actuality down to unforgettable essentials, and it can charge the most ordinary matters with very extraordinary significance. It is most characteristic, this fully developed poetry of Mr. Hardy's, when it deals with some crucial psychological moment; the following poem may be taken as a fair specimen:—

"Sixpence a week," says the girl to her lover,

etc. . . . .

L. A.

Manchester Guardian Feb 5, 1915

MR. HARDY'S NOVELS.

To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian.

Sir,—In the review of "Satires of Circumstance," Mr. Hardy's latest volume of poems, appearing in your issue of to-day, "L. A." refers to the cause of the discontinuance of that great master's series of great novels, and says:—

"Many people have regretted that his fiction should, apparently, have come so definitely to an end with 'Jude the Obscure,' and it was supposed, not very sensibly perhaps, that the Wessex novels had their terminus in that great book merely on account of the silly, momentary outcry it aroused."

May I be permitted to quote Mr. Hardy's own words which appear in the special preface which he wrote for "Jude the Obscure" in the Wessex edition of his writings, published by Macmillan and Co. about two years ago? Mr. Hardy, referring to the senseless attack on that book when it first appeared, says:—

"Thereupon many uncursed me and the matter ended, the only effect of it on human conduct that I could discover being its effect on myself—the experience completely curing me of further interest in novel-writing."

These words of the novelist and poet seem to me conclusive proof that the cause of the discontinuance of the novels was placed on record by Mr. Hardy himself.—Yours, &c.,

D. H. AARON.

205, Maida Vale, London, W., February 2.

The Northern Whig Jan 2 1915

SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE. By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan. 4s 6d net.

Of late years Mr. Hardy has practically abandoned prose in favour of verse. The development is curious in a novelist of his standing, nor is it one that meets with the approval of all his old admirers, many of whom sigh regretfully for the vanished glories of his earlier tales. But genius must take its own way, and the impulse that compels Mr. Hardy to verse is, as all careful students of his work know, both strong and urgent. No doubt some critics will say that the author who in the best of his novels strikes the note of poetry has in his verse fallen to the level of prose. Some of the numbers in this volume are as resolutely unpoetic as ever Browning was, and if the language is less crabbed than that of the great Victorian words are handled with a feeling of strain and effort that suggests all the writer's energies were exerted to breaking point to express his meaning. One feels that in the vision of the Titanic bedded in Atlantic ooze:—

> Steel chambers, late the pyres
> Of her salamandrine fires,
> Cold currents thrid, and turn to rhythmic tidal lyres.
>
> Over the mirrors meant
> To glass the opulent,
> The seaworm crawls—grotesque, slimed, dumb, indifferent.
>
> Jewels in joy designed
> To ravish the sensuous mind,
> Lie lightless, all their sparkles bleared and black and blind.
>
> Dim moon-eyed fishes near
> Gaze at the gilded gear,
> And query: "What does this vaingloriousness down here?"

Yet if the words do not always come easily Mr Hardy rarely fails to stamp his personality upon them, and his conceptions have the dignity and force of Assyrian sculpture in contrast to the Greek smoothness and finish at which some of his rivals aim. That his skill as a novelist does not forsake him when he shapes his thoughts in metre is shown in the "Satires of Circumstance," which give this book its title. They are another bundle of life's little ironies etched in with an economy of line that reveals the master. Space permits us to quote only one:—

> "O that mastering tune?" And up in the bed
> Like a lace-robed phantom springs the bride;
> "And why?" asks the man she had that day wed,
> With a start, as the band plays on outside;
> "It's the townsfolks' cheery compliment
> Because of our marriage, my Innocent."
>
> "O, but you don't know! 'Tis the passionate air
> To which my old Love waltzed with me,
> And I swore as we spun that none should share
> My home, my kisses, till death, save he!
> And he dominates me, and thrills me through,
> And it's he I embrace while embracing you!"

The theme differs, but the point of view is the same throughout—blank disillusion and a grim determination to force the tragic facts of life upon careless optimists. Not everybody will accept his gospel; indeed the author himself finds small joy in it. Here is his view of the search for happiness:—

> "They look for a new life, rich and strange;
> They do not know that, let them range
> Wherever they may, they will get no change.
>
> "They will drag their house-gear ever so far
> In their search for a home no miseries mar;
> They will find that as they were they are.
>
> "That every hearth has a ghost, alack,
> And can be but the scene of a bivouac
> Till they move perforce—no time to pack!"

It may seem depressing, yet out of it Mr. Hardy can conjure beauty, and his bitter songs live in the mind when the sugared stuff which other writers delight to dish up has wholly lost its savour.

The British Review Jan 1915

SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE. THOMAS HARDY. MACMILLAN. 4/6 net.

WHEN the reader asks himself the inevitable question: "What causes this man to break into song?" of Mr. Thomas Hardy—and it is a very proper and in no way impertinent question to ask of any poet—the reply is not to be got without some research. The rather gloomy and regretful tone of his verses is not, of course, essentially poetic or unpoetic, though there is a saying that any man can write poetry on melancholy topics. His philosophy, on the other hand, is not so well fitted for metrical expression as was that of George Meredith, with whom he is instinctively compared, because Mr. Hardy is negative and Meredith positive in thought. Both of them manage to be rather confusing in their speech now and then, perhaps as a result of turning a pen from the long rhythms of prose to the more precise limits of verse.

"Satires of Circumstance," though the actual poems collected under that title are few, gives a key to the general spirit of the book. It leaves one with the impression that life is a practical joke in rather bad taste, and so desperate in its results that it ceases to be humorous. But, since there is no escape from it, we are called upon to admire the sombre beauty of the scene; for while the treatment of men and their ideals is rather savage, still life is, not only by contrast, but absolutely, noble. It is seldom delectable, since delight requires a responsive mind, and here the mind is obsessed by memories and forebodings. Nemesis rules over all, trees, streams, and cliffs, and over the puny characters of men which here and there are exposed, satirically enough, as subjects for analysis.

As usual, the thought governs the diction, which is resonant and straightforward in nature-painting, conversational, or somewhat Browningesque in the description of character. It is not always happy, by which is meant here the fact that little of it could not have been said just as well in other words. One poem, *A Singer Asleep*, stands out very strongly, with striking phrase and feeling. That and the seldom failing landscape poetry make the virtue of the book.

Harrow Gazette Jan 8 1915

BY

REV. JOHN J. POOL. F.R.G S.

"SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE."

By Thomas Hardy (Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 4s. 6d. net).

This is a volume of Lyrics and Reveries with Miscellaneous Pieces. If Mr. Hardy is not as great in verse as in prose, he is however a true poet. His genius is versatile, and whatever he writes wins attention. But especially in satire does he make his mark. There is perhaps nothing permanently satisfying in satire, but it has a part to play in human life, and Mr. Hardy shows us what it may be at its best. How he can bring out the blended humour and pathos of a situation, and at the same time hint at the practical helpful outcome of it all, is well shown in the short piece entitled—

"IN THE CEMETERY!"

Other satires deal with "At the Drapers," "In the Study," "At Tea," "In the Moonlight." All are clever.

Amongst the more serious pieces is a very remarkable one headed "A Plaint to Man." It pictures God as speaking to humanity somewhat respectfully:

> "Wherefore; O Man, did there come to you
> The unhappy need of creating me—
> A form like your own—for praying to?"

Mr. Hardy is, as we all know, greatly daring, and yet reverent with all his daring.

If any of my readers do not know Mr. Hardy as a poet, they would do well to obtain this latest volume of his. If they are already acquainted with the great author's muse, then they are certain to want to add this collection to their storehouse.

Sunday Times 22 Nov 1914

MR. HARDY'S LATEST GIFT.§

§ "Satires of Circumstance, Lyrics and Reveries, With Miscellaneous Pieces." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.)

His war poem, included here, is as brave an effort as we could have wished for from the author who pictured for us old England under the menace of Napoleon. And there is a whole series of elegies here written in record of a dead woman which are instinct with beauty. I have no room for more than a couple of stanzas from one:

> Nobody thinks: there, there she lay
> In a room by the Hoe, like the bud of a flower,
> And listened, just after the bedtime hour,
> To the stammering chimes that used to play
> The quaint old Hundred-and-thirteenth tune
> In Saint Andrew's Tower
> Night, morn, and noon.
>
> Nobody calls to mind that here
> Upon Boterel Hill, where the carters skid,
> With cheeks whose airy flush outbid
> Fresh fruit in bloom, and free of fear,
> She cantered down as if she must fall
> (Though she never did),
> To the charm of all.

The lilt of these is infectious.

F. G. BETTANY.

26 Nov 1914

Express.

By SIDNEY DARK.

THOMAS HARDY: POET.

> When I came back from Lyonnesse
> With magic in my eyes,
> None managed to surmise
> What meant my godlike gloriousness,
> When I came back from Lyonnesse
> With magic in my eyes.

Athenæum
September 26 1914

SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE. Lyrics and Reveries, with Miscellaneous Pieces. By Thomas Hardy. (London: Macmillan and Co.) 4s 6d net.

The pieces which suggest the title of this book of verse show Mr Hardy in a vein in which no one can excel him. These pieces are short. Some are not so long as a sonnet, while few are much longer; and they are all written with a dramatic power and brevity which are really extraordinary. There is a directness and an intensity which paradoxically might be termed almost repellent. The situations described are, we may flatter ourselves, rare in their occurrence, but they are none of them impossible; and they all have about them a quality of sarcasm, of what in a play would be termed dramatic irony. We know of nothing outside of Browning whereto a comparison might be made.

Mr Hardy gives a narrative interest to most of the poems in the volume, but we feel he is most at home when he sings involuntarily of a lady just dead who had filled a great place in his life. There is a note of deep sadness about most of the poems, and this gives a melancholy pleasure of its own. Arresting in its sense of loss, and in its delicate music is "The Walk":

"You did not walk with me
Of late to the hill-top tree
By the gated ways,
As in earlier days;
You were weak and lame,
So you never came,
And I went alone, and I did not mind,
Not thinking of you as left behind.

I walked up there to-day,
Just in the former way:
Surveyed around
The familiar ground
By myself again:
What difference, then?
Only that underlying sense
Of the look of a room on returning thence."

But even to these more emotional poems the author adds a story-interest, and displays even in his most touching pieces a baffling sense of humour. He loves the creature he paints, but it is not blind, unreasoning love; it is love which is so strong that it can afford to laugh. The daring juxtaposition of tragedy and humour is nothing new in our author, and it is even known as one of his most marked features.

Sphere June 15. 1918.

One of Miss Lowell's poets is, of course, Mr. Edgar Lee Masters, whose *Spoon River Anthology* struck me as peculiarly thrilling and interesting when it appeared, but I am rather surprised that Miss Lowell does not acknowledge the obvious indebtedness of Mr. Masters in this, his one successful book, to Mr. Thomas Hardy. Mr. Masters is careful to explain in the introduction to the *Spoon River Anthology* that his verses appeared first in Reedy's *Mirror* for May, 1914, whereas Mr. Hardy's *Satires of Circumstance* was published at the end of 1914; but Mr. Masters must have been acquainted with the various poems in *Satires of Circumstance*, because these appeared first in *The Fortnightly Review* for 1911, and also in American periodicals in that year, so that there cannot be the shadow of a doubt that Mr. Masters was largely influenced by Mr. Hardy's work. Yet by a curious irony of circumstance one critic actually suggested, in reviewing *Satires of Circumstance*, that the author was indebted to Mr. Masters. I am the more surprised that Miss Lowell does not acknowledge this obvious indebtedness because I know that she is a great admirer of Mr. Hardy, and actually paid him a visit in Dorchester in the summer of 1914 when she was motoring through England.

American & Reviews of Sat.s of Circumstance

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THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, JANUARY 24, 1915

MR. HARDY'S SATIRES

"Lyrics and Reviews" Full of Beauty, Pessimism, and the Substance of Many Novels

SATIRES OF CIRCUMSTANCE. Lyrics and Reveries. With Miscellaneous Pieces. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan & Co. $1.50.

IT is idle to pretend that the announcement of a new volume of poems by Thomas Hardy means as much as that of a new novel by him would, for he and Meredith were the last of the masters of fiction of their century, and now he stands alone. But within the brief limits of "Satires of Circumstance" he has compressed the substance of many novels. One after another the poems stand, torches of drama fired by imagination, some of them scarcely safe to approach, the sparks fly so dangerously. "God's Funeral" is one of these. In this poem we have the sweep of vision which marks "The Dynasts," combined with that intense and tragic quality of mind which animates "Jude the Obscure." If any one since Shelley has written a more daring and searchingly imaginative piece of verse, I fail to recall it. Yet even in this we find Hardy's worst fault as a poet—an awkwardness of technique which occasionally, at the height of inspiration, creaks like an overladen whipcart. The worst instance of it appears in "The Obliterate Tomb," where phantoms of the dead whisper:

"Ha," they hollowly hackered,—
ms the line, and the ghosts instantly shrink to
mmsby size.

But for one harshness we find many felicities, he verse,

And a blackbird tries over old airs in the pine,

music and a picture at once, while the lyric "When I Set Out for Lyonesse" is full of charm. It is not, however, either by its awkwardness its mellifluence that "Satires of Circumstance" should be judged. Though it is true that no poem is safe as such beyond the accidents of form, Thomas Hardy's come as near it as any. They embody the sad probings of the minds who have weighed—

Scarce consciously,
The eternal question of what Life was,
And why we were there, and by whose strange laws
That which mattered most could not be.

nd to such—and they are many—the poems will ho as the disembodied, articulate voice of their wn spirit.

The question has been discussed as to whether r. Hardy is or is not a pessimist. Whatever is novels may indicate, in this volume we think at he has proved himself to be one. Many oets have sung of regret for death, but who but ardy have sung so poignantly of the death of egret? In "The Ghost of the Past" the pathos it is almost intolerable:

We two kept house, the Past and I,
The Past and I;
I tended while it hovered nigh,
Leaving me never alone.
It was a spectral housekeeping
Where fell no jarring tone,
As strange, as still a housekeeping
As ever has been known.

It dwelt with me just as it was,
Just as it was
When first its prospects gave me pause
In wayward wanderings,
Before the years had torn old troths
As they tear all sweet things,
Before gaunt griefs had worn old troths
And dulled old rapturings.

And then its form began to fade,
Began to fade,
Its gentle echoes subtler played
At eves upon my ear
Than when the Autumn's look embrowned
The lonely chambers here,
The Autumn's settling shades embrowned
Nooks that it haunted near.

And so with time my vision less,
Yes, less and less
Makes of that Past my housemistress,
It dwindles in my eye;
It looms a far-off skeleton
And not a comrade nigh,
A fitful far-off skeleton
Dimming as days draw by.

Over and over again we are made to feel that while it is sad that love must die, that life must sink beneath the mold, it is much sadder that the living should forget dead love and seek other loves; much more of a tragedy that we can—nay, must we must—stand upon the mold that shrouds [illegible]

arms to the sun. And this feeling is of the very essence of pessimism. It is not because God is dead that Mr. Hardy is bowed down; he is sorrowful because man shares with nature the power and the inward urgency to blossom o'er graves. Which, pushed to its last conclusion, means that he is sorrowful because the race still possesses the will to live.

It would be unjust to Mr. Hardy, however, to leave the impression with the reader that "Satires of Circumstance" is dyed through and through with this dark tint. Most of the poems in it, it is true, deal with disaster, else the title would not be as accurate as it is. But many of them have the searching humor, verging on grimness, which we are accustomed to in the Wessex novels, and others are of a really extraordinary beauty, considering the things Mr. Hardy tries to make the English language do in the way of expressing his thought. He steadily refuses to entrust it gently, he always compels it, sometimes even with violence. And then, after a period of recalcitrancy, it bends to his hand in phrases of pure loveliness. This is especially true of the group of poems addressed to a lady poetically lost, a lady—

with nut-colored hair,
And gray eyes, and rose-flush coming and going,

who was accustomed as a girl to ride upon the cliffs "with bright hair flapping free," and who still, in at least one heart, rides as vividly and valiantly down the years. And oddly enough, in these poems there is no pessimism. For in them Mr. Hardy rises to his own ideal of the faithful lover, and his mourning is unalloyed by that springing of renewed hope which creates such conflict in him when he observes it in the world at large. And with all his sorrow, pessimistic and other, the author does leave with us, as with the "slowly-stepping train" that follow God's funeral, "a pale yet positive gleam" low upon the horizon. In "To Meet, or Otherwise," he finds that—

Amid this bustle
Clamor and din
Through which we grope, and from whose thorns we ache,

it is still true that—

In the one long-sweeping symphony
From times remote
Till now, of human tenderness, shall we
Supply one note,
Small and untraced, yet that will ever be
Somewhere afloat
Amid the spheres, as part of sick Life's antidote.

Not a very cheering destiny, perhaps, after all the fume and fret of our vast endeavor upon the earth, but in the very smallness and faintness of the trace which we are encouraged, not too confidently, to hope that we may leave behind us in the cosmos, there is a certain tonic quality that is not altogether ungrateful, after so many young poets have shrieked themselves hoarse about their importance in the scheme of things.

The following article appeared in
THE CHICAGO EVENING POST 1/2/15

A Poet of Reality.

Satires of Circumstance: Lyrics and Reveries, by Thomas Hardy. (The Macmillan Company.)

The limitations of Mr. Hardy's Muse are so obvious—and so unimportant—that only the blind and ungracious would stop to dwell on them. Let us admit that Mr. Hardy cannot write occasional verse without sometimes falling into very awkward and unmusical lines.

And, having admitted the worst, let us proceed to pay homage to perhaps the wisest, most seasoned and tenderest poet now writing in English.

Almost as blind as the critic who merely pokes fun at occasional lapses in felicity is the critic who sees in Mr. Hardy only the disillusioned cynic, the flaunter in our faces of encoffined humanity and all the sable furniture of death. Much, indeed, of life and illusion one must leave behind when entering Mr. Hardy's drab portal, but, once thru it, one gains a positive sense of beauty, a pervading atmosphere of quiet tenderness and a realization of human love—deep beyond sentimentality—that will more than solace the mind for the insubstantial bubbles that Mr. Hardy so gently, yet none the less fatally, pricks.

"I don't see how a man who thinks that [illegible]

of the mystically credulous when their attention is drawn to the exponent in literature of disillusion. But life is a paradox in that respect, and nowhere is that paradox better illustrated than in this poet of plain, nonparadoxical statement. For his narrow gate of disillusionment lets him into a mellow land as far above cynicism as it is remote from faith.

Let us enter that land by its narrow gate.

We find the entrance in that section that gives the book its title. Here is one of the more poignant poems in that series of "fifteen glimpses":

IN THE CEMETERY.

"You see those mothers squabbling there?"
Remarks the man of the cemetery.
"One says in tears, 'Tis mine lies here!'
Another, 'Nay, mine, you Pharisee!'
Another, 'How dare you move my flowers
And put your own on this grave of ours!'
But all their children were laid therein
At different times, like sprats in a tin.

"And then the main drain had to cross,
And we moved the lot some nights ago,
And packed them away in the general fosse
With hundreds more. But their folks don't know,
And as well cry over a new-laid drain
As anything else to ease your pain!"

And there are many poems in this book bitterer in their disillusion, more shatteringly iconoclastic in their intent, than the one quoted. To the question, then, if we may put it in a less naive form than the retort just quoted, "By what does such an iconoclast live?" there is a twofold answer. By joyous sympathy with the real, tho (from the individual's standpoint) transitory, life of nature is the first answer:

How do you know that the pilgrim track
Along the belting zodiac
Swept by the sun in his seeming rounds
Is traced by now to the Fishes' bounds
And into the Ram, when weeks of cloud
Have wrapt the sky in a clammy shroud,
And never as yet a tinct of spring
Has shown in the earth's appareling;
O vespering bird, how do you know,
How do you know?

How do you know, deep underground,
Hid in your bed from sight and sound,
Without a turn in temperature,
With weather life can scarce endure,
That light has won a fraction's strength,
And day put on some moment's length,
Whereof in merest rote will come,
Weeks hence, mild airs that do not numb;
O crocus root, how do you know,
How do you know?

—he sings to us in "The Year's Awakening." And, in the second place, by the abiding reality of love, which as a testable empiric aspect of life can withstand the most acid iconoclasm. Hence, such a poem as the following, dated July, 1914, a date not so very far from that of the veteran poet's second marriage:

A POET.

Attentive eyes, fantastic heed,
Assessing minds, he does not need.
Nor urgent wrists to sup or dine,
Nor pledges in the roseate wine.

For loud acclaim he does not care
By the august or rich or fair,
Nor for smart pilgrims from afar,
Curious on where his hauntings are.

But soon or later, when you hear
That he has doffed his wrinkled gear,
Some evening at the first star ray
Come to his graveside, pause and say:

"Whatever the message his to tell,
Two thoughtful women loved him well."
Stand and say that amid the dim:
It will be praise enough for him.

And a final quotation must suffice to indicate Mr. Hardy's frequent flashes of pure poetic vision:

Weeks and weeks we had loved beneath that blazing blue
Which had lost the art of raining, as her eyes of late had, too. . . .

Mr. Hardy's Muse—if we may compare him to other poets—is the blackbird's boxwood flute, blown not so shrilly and martially as Henley sometimes blew it (for he often mistook it for a fife), nor so insistently in the minor key as the flute of that blackbird whom A. E. Housman interpreted as advising him to:

Lie down, lie down, young yeoman.
What use to rise and rise?

—and whom he stoned for the advice—but blown by one who is not only master of its every stop but who plays it ever in time with the two dim unrelated heartbeats of Nature and of Man. That is why Mr. Hardy's voice consoles us for empty lost illusions. Lawrence Gilman.

BOSTON EVENING TRANSCRIPT.
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1914

THOMAS HARDY—POET-NOVELIST

His Satires of Circumstance Little Tales in Verse

By E. F. E.

DESPITE the interval of twenty years that has passed since the writing of his last novel, it is clearly evident that Mr. Hardy's ruling passion for story-telling persists in the midst of his verse-making. The imaginative vision of the novelist is strong within him. He has struggled hard to become a poet, and while at times he has come within measurable distance of his goal, he has never succeeded in throwing off the mantle of the story-teller, and he has never allowed us to forget him as one of the greatest of the later Victorian English novelists. He was born a novel-writer, but he has made himself a poet. In "Wessex Poems," in "Poems of the Past and Present," in "Time's Laughingstocks," and now in "Satires of Circumstance," and in almost every poem in each collection, he has rarely been able to do anything more than to tell a tale in verse.

Other poets—the poets who are born and not made—make of their poetry a song, a picture, a vision, a reality, an ideal, a thing of life or of beauty. It may express a mood, it may vivify a feeling, it may portray a series of emotions, it may carry music to the ear or the glories of the heavens and the earth to the eye. If it chance to contain a story, the story is not the be-all and end-all of its existence. The story is after all, even in an epic poem, even in such poems as "The Ancient Mariner," simply a means to an end—the expression of an artistic impulse through the medium of poetry. The poet tells a story because at that moment he has discovered the story to be the most effective form for bringing to life what is in him.

But Mr. Hardy is a poet with a difference. He is not as other poets. He has deliberately renounced his vocation of novelist, he has purposely cast aside the great gifts that enabled him to write such masterpieces of fiction as "The Return of the Native," "The Woodlanders," "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," and "Jude the Obscure." In place of the Thomas Hardy who wrote these and many other novels and short stories that have become a part of English literature, we are asked to accept unreluctantly the Thomas Hardy who wrote "The Dynasts" and "Poems of the Past and Present." He still remains, nevertheless, the novelist who has turned poet. In his writing of verse he is less poet than story-teller. Instead of writing about and analyzing at length the experiences and the minds of a Eustacia Vye, a Marty South, a Gabriel Oak, a Swithin St. Cleeve, or a Tess Durbeyfield, he takes a fragment of a man's or a woman's life and condenses it into a few rhymed lines. These lines may or may not be poetry. Sometimes they are and sometimes they are not, but whatever they may be seems merely the result of chance. Mr. Hardy is bound to tell his story in each of these many short poems, just as he was bound to tell it in any one of his larger novels, and he tells it more than once at the expense of rhyme and metre. Every one of these "fifteen glimpses" at life that he calls "Satires of Circumstance" is a story complete in itself, and so, too, is each of the other poems in the volume that are severally classified as "Lyrics and Reveries," "Poems of 1912-13," and "Miscellaneous Pieces."

Now that we have had our say about Thomas Hardy the novelist-poet, and about Thomas Hardy the poet-novelist, now that we have shared with many others the lament that we are to have no more Wessex Novels, we can unhesitatingly say that the poems in this volume, as in its several predecessors, are notable for a strength, an originality, a form and a sequence of ideas that are almost unique. They place their writer apart as a poet, just as he stood aside from and above his contemporaries as a novelist. They are masterpieces of fiction in verse. More than once they condense the pathos of a lifetime and of more than one life into a dozen lives. Here, for instance, is a colloquy, "By Her Aunt's Grave."

"Sixpence a week," says the girl to her lover,
"Aunt used to bring me, for she could confide
In me alone, she vowed. 'Twas to cover
The cost of her headstone when she died.
And that was a year ago last June;
I've not yet fixed it. But I must soon."
"And where is the money now, my dear?"
"O, snug in my purse . . . Aunt was so slow
In saving it—eighty weeks, or near." . . .
"Let's spend it," he hints. "For she won't know.
There's a dance to-night at the Load of Hay."
She passively nods. And they go that way.

How clearly the scene is visualized, how distinctly we see the man and the woman, how audibly we hear them speaking!

Matter for a hundred stories of greater or less length is recklessly compressed into these tales in verse. Mr. Hardy is a veritable spendthrift in material, an incorrigible miser in words. He reduces his episodes, his view of the men and women who take part in them, his reporting of their speech, to the very lowest terms. He says himself only barely enough to suggest the happenings he is weaving; he permits them the barest outline of thought and the scantiest phrase. Poem after poem is as compact with significance as these three quatrains of "The Woman in the Rye."

"Why do you stand in the dripping rye,
Cold-lipped, unconscious, wet to the knee,
When there are firesides near?" said I.
"I told him I wished him dead," said she.

"Too, cried it in my haste to one
Whom I loved, whom I well loved still;
And die he did. And I hate the sun,
And stand here lonely, aching, chill:

"Stand waiting, waiting under the skies,
That blow reproach, the while I see
The rocks sheer off to where he lies,
Wript in a peace withheld from me."

The fatality, the irony of life, the impossibility of things being otherwise than they are in the iron grip of destiny, come to the surface here exactly as they appear and reappear in the Wessex novels. Mr. Hardy cannot release himself from the idea of fate that has dominated his entire literary existence. He has become its apostle, and as he preaches it alike in prose and in verse, he gives it a relentlessness that has made him a realist of realists in spite of the fact that he is a writer of ultra romance and a leader among the romanticists. In "The Newcomer's Wife" he gives to an old story a new touch and a new life.

He paused on the sill of a door ajar
That screened a lively liquor bar,
For the name had reached him through the door
Of her he had married the week before.

"We called her the Hack of the Parade;
But she was discreet in the games she played;
If slightly worn, she's pretty yet,
And gossips, after all, forget.

"And he knows nothing of her past;
I am glad the girl's in luck at last;
Such ones, though stale to native eyes,
Newcomers snatch at as a prize."

"Yes, being a stranger, he sees her blent
Of all that's fresh and innocent,
Nor dreams how many a love-campaign
She had enjoyed before his reign!"

That night there was the splash of a fall
Over the shiny harbour-wall:
They searched, and at the deepest place
Found him with crabs upon his face.

Could anything be better than this as a fragment of life? Could anything be worse as its poetical expression?

With all this emphasis placed upon Thomas Hardy as a genius who is bending his energies toward the making of narrative poetry, it will not at the same time be just to overlook him as a lyric poet, when almost by chance, as it seems, he makes music of his verse. "When I Set Out For Lyonnesse" is all the more surprising because it is so unexpected.

When I set out for Lyonnesse,
A hundred miles away,
The rime was on the spray,
And starlight lit my lonesomeness
When I set out for Lyonnesse
A hundred miles away.

What would befchance at Lyonnesse
While I should sojourn there
No prophet durst declare,
Nor did the wisest wizard guess
What would befchance at Lyonnesse
While I should sojourn there.

When I came back from Lyonnesse
With magic in my eyes,
None managed to surmise
What meant my godlike gloriousness,
When I came back from Lyonnesse
With magic in my eyes.

This, however, is not the characteristic Thomas Hardy, nor is it the purposeful Thomas Hardy who has striven to put into these "Satires of Circumstance" and their accompanying verses more and more of those life's little ironies whereof he is a masterful discoverer and analyist. There are a multitude of lyricists who can do as well as or better than this, but there is only one Thomas Hardy who can write either the Wessex novels or these fragments of life in verse.

The Nation

Feb. 4, 1915]

Satires of Circumstance. By Thomas Hardy. New York: The Macmillan Co. $1.50 net.

Mr. Thomas Hardy writes verse—anyhow. By turns he is rough, dissonant, mean, bald, pompous, grotesque, all but burlesque, in his metre and diction. But no man throws off—no man sheds—his faults with such curious rapidity and certainty as he. Before his dogged, surly, indomitable vigor they are pushed aside like seaweed or brushwood before the prow of a steamer or the cow-catcher of a locomotive. That vigor is felt still more effectively in phrases that have the edge of things, that rise, on any increase of tension, into piercing emotional intensity or waylaying and ensnaring beauty.

In these poems the loam is grave-mould, the earth's population consists of dreamers and ghosts. Strangely enough, the warmth and concreteness of the treatment overcomes the impalpableness of the material. Never were places more trenchantly localized, or objects stamped with a more convincing authenticity: mere memories in Mr. Hardy put to shame the actualities of most poets, and the flesh-and-blood people of normal writers might warm themselves by contact with his ghosts. All is said in saying that we are dealing yet with the scarcely diminished potency of the imagination that created Egdon Heath in "The Return of the Native" and the dairy farms in "Tess of the D'Urbervilles." Do we find old age in these poems? Old age, in its disenchantment, yes—but not in its palsy: here is ravage, but not decay, desolation combined with vitality.

Of the fifteen short poems to which the title "Satire" is specifically applied I quote the most vivid:

"Sixpence a week," says the girl to her lover,
"Aunt used to bring me, for she could confide
In me alone, she vowed. 'Twas to cover
The cost of her headstone when she died.
And that was a year ago last June;
I've not yet fixed it. But I must soon."
"And where is the money now, my dear?"
"O, snug in my purse . . . Aunt was so slow
In saving it—eighty weeks, or near." . . .
"Let's spend it," he hints. "For she won't know.
There's a dance to-night at the Load of Hay."
She passively nods. And they go that way.

What is to be our judgment of that hopeless and desolate philosophy of which the above poem, so perfect in its grim, dubiously poetical kind, is a not untypical example? Men will differ as to whether it be right and useful to inform a death-stricken man of the gravity of his condition; but all men will agree that any imaginative dilatation on the grimness of the situation would be immoral and cruel. The same law applies to the larger unit, humanity. Granting, to oblige Mr. Hardy, that the world is sick to death, and that it will profit by a knowledge of the fact, nothing can justify the use of imagination to magnify the horrors of the circumstance. Moreover, Mr. Hardy fails to note that man derives a certain honor from the abasement of the universe. In a godless and soulless world, every generous and magnanimous act assumes the splendor of an heroic sacrifice performed in a pirate's den or a humane and tender sentiment uttered in a brothel. Mr. Hardy's works, however, are less depressing than his gospel. I think some of us are invigorated by contact with a richer emotional and intellectual life than our own, even when the bent of its philosophy is disheartening.

The Dial "Chicago

June 24 1915

Mr. Thomas Hardy is of those who keep the ritual without the faith. In other words, whether in prose or in verse, he holds to the traditional forms of his art despite the hopeless and unbeautiful creed which is familiar to all his readers. In his early volume of verse, the "Wessex Poems," he somewhere expressed himself to this effect: that life would be more tolerable if we could believe ourselves to be in the toils of a malicious power, bent on causing suffering,—it would at any rate be a more rational state than to feel that our suffering is without either purpose or meaning. In later years, as everyone knows, he has achieved the satisfaction merely dreamed of in the poem referred to, and come to something like a solemn faith in a Power not ourselves that makes for unrighteousness. This gives a kind of ideality to his pessimism which is quite wanting in the insignificant disillusioned ghosts of Spoon River. His recent volume of collected poems represents this in many a passage, but in none so nobly as in the lines on the loss of the "Titanic" (called "The Convergence of the Twain"):

"... Well, while was fashioning
This creature of cleaving wing,
The Immanent Will that stirs and urges everything

"Prepared a sinister mate
For her — so gaily great —
A Shape of Ice, for the time far and dissociate.

"And as the smart ship grew
In stature, grace, and hue,
In shadowy silent distance grew the Iceberg too.

"Alien they seemed to be:
No mortal eye could see
The intimate welding of their later history,

"Or sign that they were bent
By paths coincident
On being anon twin halves of one august event,

"Till the Spinner of the Years
Said 'Now!' And each one hears,
And consummation comes, and jars two hemispheres."

The title poems of the volume, called "Satires of Circumstance," are brilliant ironic sketches in precisely the mordant manner of Mr. Hardy's most disconcerting prose narrative. Quite as keen, and perhaps even more finely balanced in respect to comedy and tragedy, is the neighboring dialogue between a buried woman and some one digging on her grave. At first she imagines it to be her lover planting rue, but the answer comes, "No, he wedded another yesterday." "My nearest kin, then?" "No, they are saying, 'What use to plant flowers?'" "My enemy, then, prodding maliciously?" "No, she thinks you no more worth her hate." "Who is it, then?" "Your little dog, my mistress dear." "Ah, one true heart left behind—I might have known." But the dog answers:

"Mistress, I dug upon your grave
To bury a bone, in case
I should be hungry near this spot
When passing on my daily trot.
I am sorry, but I quite forgot
It was your resting-place."

It seemed well to paraphrase the greater portion of this little narrative, not merely for the sake of brevity, but to exemplify the fact that this is a type of composition, again, which does not lose its essence when transferred to prose. The verse points it, to be sure,—gives finish and consequent satisfaction; but the spirit is not that of poetry, because the spirit of poetry is never that of mere negation. And this is true of a great part of Mr. Hardy's verse. But there are plenty of exceptions, as in the poem on the "Titanic," where, as we have seen, a big and looming imaginative concept rises from the very ruins of faith.

Selected Poems

The New Statesman 4th November 1916.

Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

A SELECTION from Thomas Hardy's poems has been included in Messrs. Macmillan's Golden Treasury Series. Mr. Hardy is, I believe, the first living author to be included in the series; and the implied tribute to the durable quality of his verse is thoroughly justified. The idea was particularly happy, as it will lead to a much more general appreciation of what some of us think the finest portion of Mr. Hardy's works. His best poems, scattered in volumes of varying quality, have still to make their cumulative impression. He has never written anything thoroughly dull; but a good deal of his verse (though not much in the latest two volumes) consisted of narrative poems in which the gloom was so heavily piled on and fate was allowed, or rather compelled, to play such pranks with the characters, that one got tired of it. Generally, it may be said, his later work is much better than his earlier. He has lost his inclination to put the plots of sombre short-stories or novels into verse; he has become more and more (to misapply one of his own phrases) the man "with a musing eye" recording his personal reactions to life; and his writing has steadily gained in skill and beauty. The music of some of his later verse is surpassed by scarcely anything of the kind in the language. Many, perhaps the majority, of his best poems have been written between the ages of sixty-five and seventy-five. They are the work of an aged retired novelist, who, as he grows older, seems to develop more and more the sensitiveness, the tenderness and the delicacy that frequently get crusted over as a man's youth recedes.

* * *

The present selection has, presumably, been made by the author himself; and—though there is no preface to state the fact—many of the poems have been altered and improved since they were last printed. The selection could scarcely have been better done. Personally I should like to have seen *The Trampwoman's Tragedy* substituted for *Her Death and After* in the narrative section; but there are few other changes I would make. A hundred and twenty poems are given, and it is obvious that the author knows as well as anybody which are his best. They are drawn from all periods. The earliest date from the sixties; the latest is the beautiful poem, *The Oxen*, which was printed in the *Times* last Christmas, and in which an author whom Mr. Chesterton brutally, but not without some little justification, had compared to "the village atheist blaspheming over the village idiot" recalled the old legend that on Christmas Eve at midnight "the meek, mild creatures" kneel in their pens:

> I feel,
> If some one said on Christmas Eve,
> "Come; see the oxen kneel
>
> In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
> Our childhood used to know,"
> I should go with him in the gloom,
> Hoping it might be so.

A phrase in this poem, "Nor did it occur to one of us there To doubt they were kneeling then," illustrates one of Mr. Hardy's typical qualities. "It did not occur to us to" is a manner of speech of which most poets fight very shy; they would say "we did not doubt," or "we doubted not," or "no man of us doubted," or something of the sort. It would be untrue to say that Mr. Hardy follows literally Wordsworth's rule that the language of everyday life should be employed; he does sometimes use very out-of-the-way epithets, Latin abstractions, made-up hyphenated words. But very often he employs the ordinary hack-phrase of conversation; and one never notices that it is hack. He writes a poem as he might dictate it, with the first words to hand. But the core of feeling and thought is there, and the poem is all the better for the ordinariness of his diction. Equally peculiar is the success with which he makes music out of cacophonous words. He does not eliminate words that seem right merely because they result in what most writers would feel an unnegotiable concatenation of consonants. The first line that catches my eye on the page opposite the poem just quoted is "The candle slanting sooty wick'd," which is about as remote as it could be from the rippling glide of Italian. But it never matters with Hardy. His most gnarled sentences make a music of their own; the profound pensiveness, the acute emotion which dominate them impose upon them, as it were, a coherent beauty of sound; they enforce beauty of intonation on the voice that reads them; your tongue would get tied up if you tried to read some of them quickly, but you have no inclination to read them quickly. But his language is not always rugged.

* * *

The number of Mr. Hardy's experiments with rhythms and stanza-forms is very large, and some of the results are exquisite. One of the simplest and most successful of his discoveries is the stanza of *The Ghost of the Past:*

> We two kept house, the Past and I,
> The Past and I;
> Through all my tasks it hovered nigh,
> Leaving me never alone.
> It was a spectral housekeeping
> Where fell no jarring tone,
> As strange, as still a housekeeping
> As ever has been known.

There are five verses. The fourth is:

> And then its form began to fade,
> Began to fade,
> Its gentle echoes faintlier played
> At eves upon my ear
> Than when the autumn's look embrowned
> The lonely chambers here,
> The autumn's settling shades embrowned
> Nooks that it haunted near.

The mood of retrospective melancholy is dominant in Mr. Hardy's verse. Almost all the greatest lyrics in this book spring from memories of the dead or of scenes long since visited. One group reaches its climax in *Friends Beyond:*

> William Dewy, Tranter Reuben, Farmer Ledlow late at plough,
> Robert's kin, and John's and Ned's
> And the Squire, and Lady Susan, lie in Mellstock churchyard now.

and the more intimately personal poems culminate in the very moving series written after the death of the poet's wife: *The Going, I Found Her Out There, Without Ceremony, The Voice, A Dream or No, After a Journey, Beeny Cliff, Where the Picnic Was,* and *The Phantom Horsewoman,* with its picture of the man standing on the sands and gazing at something unseen:

> A ghost girl-rider. And though, toil-tried,
> He withers daily,
> Time touches her not,
> But she still rides gaily
> In his rapt thought
> On that shagged and shaly
> Atlantic spot,
> And as when first-eyed
> Draws rein and sings to the swing of the tide.

I believe that Mr. Hardy was in the running for the Laureateship when it was last vacant. There were objections in high quarters. It was felt, perhaps, that a Laureate should be an Optimist. But though the public still knows Mr. Hardy chiefly as a novelist, he is certainly, to my thinking, one of the three best of living English poets.

SOLOMON EAGLE.

from The Socialist Review of
May - June 1917.

THOMAS HARDY—BOWDLERISED!

Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan's "Golden Treasury Series," London, 1916. 3s. net.)

Who that loves a poet is ever satisfied by a volume of selections made by another hand? The good Thomas Bowdler is perhaps dragged into my title without warrant. Omitting from his *Family Shakespeare* "those words and expressions which cannot with propriety be read aloud to a family," he sacrificed to English prudery no more than a few lines here and here, lines amusing enough to those who are not squeamish, to those who enjoy what Bernard Shaw calls somewhere the rough humour of the husband of Juliet's nurse, but lines inserted merely "to tickle the ears of the groundlings," and essential neither to the material action nor to the intellectual action of the plays. The *Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy* are like the drama of Hamlet with the character of Hamlet left out. Yet I suppose a volume in the famous "Golden Treasury Series," intended (like the *Family Shakespeare)* to be read aloud to a family, could not "with propriety" have included many pieces truly representative of Hardy's muse, pieces which I have vainly sought in the present volume, such as "Panthera," "Ralph Blossom's Soliloquy," or

> Yes; we'll wed, my little fay,
> And you shall write you mine,
> And in a villa chastely grey
> We'll house, and sleep, and dine. . . .

I prefer my cherished volume of *Time's Laughing Stocks!*

But there is much splendid verse in this "Golden Treasury" booklet, and it may prepare the minds of youthful readers, and of the freshly initiated, for stronger meat. I have space for but one quotation, which I give as characteristic in its thought, its imagery, and its music. Here are the two opening stanzas of "A Singer Asleep" (Algernon Charles Swinburne, 1837—1909), written at Bonchurch in 1910:

> In this fair niche above the unslumbering sea,
> That sentrys up and down all night, all day,
> From cove to promontory, from ness to bay,
> The Fates have fitly bidden that he should be
> Pillowed eternally.
>
> —It was as though a garland of red roses
> Had fallen about the hood of some smug nun
> When irresponsibly dropped as from the sun,
> In fulth of numbers freaked with musical closes,
> Upon Victoria's formal middle time
> His leaves of rhythm and rhyme.

one of her sisters
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chat the following
d good poetry":

itted the lines
s Fox, the assis-

ords in a way that suggested
with h language, and this was effective
th local customers, who, in addressing her, raised their voices in
ler to assist a foreigner's powers of comprehension. Miss Fox
ed at Crouch End, and alluded to her aunt as belonging to a well-
own (but not more precisely defined) county family. "If she had
t married against the wish of her people," said Miss Fox confiden-
lly, "I should, at the present moment, be following the hares
d hounds. . . ."

we might go on, and quote nearly the whole of *Madame rince.*

One of my boyhood's recollections is of a master asking a hoolfellow of mine in class to name two of Swift's most nportant works, and being told: "*Gulliver's Travels* and *hree Men in a Boat.*" I supposed at the time, and still ppose, that the *Tale of a Tub* was indicated; but I cannot member that any of us were struck by any sense of dis-ity or incongruity in the reply. We had not, of course, d the *Tale of a Tub*, nor should we have been in the least e to appreciate its transcendent and terrifying power. hat is quite certain is that we *did* appreciate *Three Men a Boat*, and did suppose it to be among the world's ad-tted masterpieces. I should be afraid to re-read it now, der the shadow of what Artemus Ward called the sheer d yellow leaf. It may be that the first fine careless pture of my perusal invested it with purpureal gleams ich I should now seek for and miss: on the other hand, may not. I shall not put it to the test: I shall merely main permanently grateful to Mr. Jerome. I cannot say at my gratitude is overwhelmingly enhanced by *Malvina Brittany.* In this volume there are several attractively itten and readable stories, but there is nothing more. lvina is a prehistoric fairy with the power of chang-g people's natures. Exiled (as a punishment for the tless exercise of this pretty fancy) from the company the White Ladies of Brittany, she is picked up by a Flight-mmander of the British Air Service, in June, 1914—and oceeds again to exercise her powers, this time in a quiet nglish village. There is promise of endless complications, t Mr. Jerome drops the idea almost before it gets properly ing. The shorter stories are more thrilling, *The Street of e Blank Wall* being good detective-stuff, and *The Fawn loves* having a painful and pathetic theme.

The author of *The Great Tradition* is a specialist in special ses. It is impossible to review her work without using e adjective "subtle." It is an adjective too frequently d too loosely used, but here it can be used ith precision. Another thing which we reviewers are clined to assert too loosely is "the influence of Henry ames." There is a sense, of course, in which Henry ames has influenced almost all of the younger writers, ut it is not in that general sense that one asserts the in-uence of Henry James on *The Great Tradition.* Indeed, ne detects here a mind with genuinely James-ian qualities—ith a genuine discernment of delicacies and dubieties, genuine sensitiveness to the nice feelings and the fine

The Nation Reviews. Nov 11. 1916

THOMAS HARDY'S POEMS.

"Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy." Golden Treasury Series. (Macmillan. 2s. 6d. net.)

Mr. Thomas Hardy, according to some people, is greater as a poet than as a novelist. That is one of those mild heresies in which the amateur of letters loves to indulge. It has about as much truth in it as the statement that Milton was greater as a controversialist than as a poet, or that Lamb's plays are better than his essays. Mr. Hardy has undoubtedly made an impressive contribution to the poetry of his time. But he has given us no verse that more than hints at the height and depth of the tragic vision which is expressed in "Jude the Obscure" and the stories in "Life's Little Ironies." He is not by temperament a singer. His music is a still small voice unevenly matched against his consciousness of midnight and storm. It is a flutter of wings in the rain over a tomb. His sense of beauty is frail and midge-like compared with his sense of everlasting frustration. The conceptions in his novels are infinitely more poetic than the conceptions in his verse. In "Tess" and "Jude" destiny presides with something of the grandeur of the ancient gods. Except in "The Dynasts" and a few of the lyrics, there is none of this brooding majesty in his verse. And even in "The Dynasts," majestic as the cosmic scheme of it is, there seems to the present writer to be more creative imagination in the prose passages than in the poetry. Truth to tell, Mr. Hardy is neither sufficiently articulate nor sufficiently fastidious to be a great poet. He does not express life easily in beautiful words or in images. There is scarcely a magical image in the hundred or so poems in the present book. Thus he writes in "I Found Her Out There" of one who:—

> "would sigh at the tale
> Of sunk Lyonesse
> As a wind-tugged tress
> Flapped her cheek like a flail."

There could not be an uglier and more prosaic exaggeration than is contained in the image in the last line. And prose intrudes in the choice of words as well as in images. Take, for example, the use of the word "domiciled" in the passage in the same poem about—

> "that western sea,
> As it swells and sobs,
> Where she once domiciled."

There are infelicities of the same kind in the first verse of the poem called "At an Inn":—

> "When we, as strangers, sought
> Their catering care,
> Veiled smiles bespoke their thought
> Of what we were.
>
> "They warmed as they opined
> Us more than friends—
> That we had all resigned
> For love's dear ends."

"Catering care" is an appalling phrase. We do not wish to over-emphasize the significance of flaws of this kind. But, at a time when all the world is eager to do honor to Mr. Hardy's poems, we think it well to refrain from doing equal honor to his faults. We shall not appreciate the splendid interpretation of earth in "The Return of the Native" more highly for persuading ourselves that:—

> "Intermissive aim at the thing sufficeth,"

is a line of good poetry. Similarly the critic, if he is to enjoy the best of Mr. Hardy, must also be resolute to admit the worst in such a verse as that with which "A Broken Appointment" begins:—

> "You did not come,
> And marching time drew on, and wore me numb,—
> Yet less for loss of your dear presence there
> Than that I thus found lacking in your make
> That high compassion which can overbear
> Reluctance for pure loving kindness' sake
> Grieved I, when, as the hope-hour stroked its sum,
> You did not come."

There are hints of the grand style of lyric poetry in these lines, but phrases like "in your make" and "as the hope-hour stroked its sum" are discords that bring it tumbling to the levels of Victorian commonplace.

What one does bless Mr. Hardy for, however, both in his verse and in his prose, is his bleak sincerity. He writes out of the reality of his experience. He has a temperament sensitive beyond that of all but a few recent writers to the pain and passion of human beings. Especially is he sensitive to the pain and passion of frustrated lovers. At least half his poems, we fancy, are poems of frustration. And they hold us under the spell of reality like a tragedy in a neighbor's house, even when they leave us most mournful over the emptiness of the world. One can appreciate how very mournful Mr. Hardy's genius is if one compares it with that of Browning, his master in the art of the dramatic lyric. Browning is also a poet of frustrated lovers. One can remember poem after poem of his with a theme that might easily have served for Mr. Hardy—"Too Late," "Cristina," "The Lost Mistress," "The Last Ride Together," "The Statue and the Bust," to name a few. But what a sense of triumph there is in Browning's tragedies! Even when he writes of the feeble-hearted, as in "The Statue and the Bust," he leaves us with the feeling that we are in the presence of weakness in a world in which courage prevails. His world is a place of opulence, not of poverty. Compare "The Last Ride Together" with Mr. Hardy's "The Phantom Horsewoman," and you will see a vast energy and beauty issuing from loss in the one, while in the other there is little but a sad shadow. To have loved even for an hour is with Browning to live for ever after in the inheritance of a mighty achievement. To have loved for an hour is, in Mr. Hardy's imagination, to have developed the sadness even more than the beauty of one's memories. Not that Mr. Hardy's is half so miserable a genius as is commonly supposed. It is false to picture him as always on his knees before the grave-worm. His faith in beauty and joy may be only a thin flame, but it is never quite extinguished. His beautiful lyric, "I Look into my Glass" is the cry of a soul dark but not utterly darkened:—

> "I look into my glass,
> And view my wasting skin,
> And say: 'Would God, it came to pass
> My heart had shrunk as thin!'
>
> "For then, I, undistrest,
> By hearts grown cold to me,
> Could lonely wait my endless rest
> With equanimity.
>
> "But Time, to make me grieve,
> Part steals, lets part abide;
> And shakes this fragile frame at eve
> With throbbings of noontide."

That is certainly worlds apart from the unquenchable joy of Browning's "All the breath and the bloom of the world in the bag of one bee"; but it is also far removed from the "Lo! you may always end it where you will" of "The City of Dreadful Night." And despair is by no means triumphant in what is perhaps the most atractive of all Mr. Hardy's poems, "The Oxen":—

> "Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock,
> 'Now they are all on their knees,'
> An elder said as we sat in a flock
> By the embers in hearthside ease.
>
> "We pictured the meek mild creatures where
> They dwelt in their strawy pen,
> Nor did it occur to one of us there
> To doubt they were kneeling then.
>
> "So fair a fancy few would weave
> In these years! Yet, I feel,
> If someone said on Christmas Eve,
> 'Come; see the oxen kneel
>
> "'In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
> Our childhood used to know,'
> I should go with him in the gloom,
> Hoping it might be so."

The mood of faith, however—or, rather, of delight in the memory of faith—is not Mr. Hardy's prevailing mood. At the same time, his unfaith relates to the duration of love rather than to human destiny. He believes in "the world's amendment." He can enter upon a war without ironical doubts, as we see in the song "Men who march away." More than this, he can look forward beyond war to the coming of a new patriotism of the world. "How long," he cries, in a poem written some years ago:—

> "How long, O ruling Teutons, Slavs, and Gaels,
> Must your wroth reasonings trade on lives like these,
> That are as puppets in a playing hand?
> When shall the saner softer polities
> Whereof we dream, have sway in each proud land,
> And Patriotism, grown Godlike, scorn to stand
> Bondslave to realms, but circle earth and seas?"

(turn over)

But, perhaps, his characteristic attitude to war is to be found, not in lines like these, but in that melancholy poem, "The Souls of the Slain," in which the souls of the dead soldiers return to their country and question a "senior soul-flame" as to how their friends and relatives have kept their doughty deeds in remembrance:—

"'And, General, how hold out our sweethearts,
Sworn loyal as doves?'
'Many mourn; many think
It is not unattractive to prink
Them in sable for heroes. Some fickle and fleet hearts
Have found them new loves.'

"'And our wives?' quoth another, resignedly,
'Dwell they on our deeds?'
'Deeds of home; that live yet
Fresh as new—deeds of fondness or fret,
Ancient words that were kindly expressed or unkindly,
These, these have their heeds.'"

Mr. Hardy has too bitter a sense of reality to believe much in the glory of war. His imagination has always been curiously interested in soldiers, but that is more because they have added a touch of color to the tragic game of life than because he is on the side of the military show. One has only to read "The Dynasts" along with "Barrack-room Ballads" to see that the attitude of Mr. Hardy to war is the attitude of the brooding artist in contrast with that of the music-hall politician. Not that Mr. Kipling did not tell us some truths about the fate of our fellows, but he related them to an atmosphere that savored of beer and tobacco rather than of eternity. The real world to Mr. Hardy is the world of ancient human things, in which war has come to be a hideous irrelevance. That is what he makes emphatically clear in "In the Time of the Breaking of Nations":—

"Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

"Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch grass:
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

"Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by;
War's annals will fade into night
Ere their story die."

It may be thought, on the other hand, that Mr. Hardy's poems about war are no more expressive of tragic futility than his poems about love. Futility and frustration are ever-recurring themes in both. His lovers, like his soldiers, rot in the grave defeated of their glory. Lovers are always severed both in life and in death:—

"Rain on the windows, creaking doors,
With blasts that besom the green,
And I am here, and you are there,
And a hundred miles between!"

In "Beyond the Last Lamp" we have the same mournful cry over severance. There are few sadder poems than this with its tristful refrain, even in the works of Mr. Hardy. It is too long to quote in full, but we must give the last verses of this lyric of lovers in a lane:—

"When I re-trod that watery way
Some hours beyond the droop of day,
Still I found pacing there the twain
Just as slowly, just as sadly,
Heedless of the night and rain.
One could but wonder who they were
And what wild woe detained them there.

"Though thirty years of blur and blot
Have slid since I beheld that spot,
And saw in curious converse there
Moving slowly, moving sadly,
That mysterious tragic pair,
Its olden look may linger on—
All but the couple; they have gone.

"Whither? Who knows, indeed. . . . And yet
To me, when nights are weird and wet,
Without those comrades there at tryst
Creeping slowly, creeping sadly,
That lone-lane does not exist.
There they seem brooding on their pain,
And will, while such a lane remain."

And death is no kinder than life to lovers:—

"I shall rot here, with those whom in their day
You never knew.
And alien ones who, ere they chilled to clay,
Met not my view,
Will in yon distant grave-place ever neighbor you.
"No shade of pinnacle or tree or tower,
While earth endures,
Will fall on my mound and within the hour
Steal on to yours;
One robin never haunt our two green covertures."

Mr. Hardy, fortunately, has the genius to express the burden and the mystery even of a world grey with rain and commonplace in achievement. There is a beauty of sorrow in these poems in which "life with the sad, seared face" mirrors itself without disguise. They bring us face to face with an experience intenser than our own. There is nothing common in the tragic image of dullness in "A Common-place Day":—

"The day is turning ghost,
And scuttles from the kalendar in fits and furtively,
To join the anonymous host
Of those that throng oblivion; ceding his place, maybe,
To one of like degree. . . .

"Nothing of tiniest worth
Have I wrought, pondered, planned; no one thing asking
blame or praise,
Since the pale corpse-like birth
Of this diurnal unit, bearing blanks in all its rays—
Dullest of dull-hued days!

"Wanly upon the panes
The rain slides, as have slid since morn my colorless thoughts;
and yet
Here, while Day's presence wanes,
And over him the sepulchre-lid is slowly lowered and set,
He wakens my regret."

In the poem which contains these verses the emotion of the poet gives words often undistinguished an almost Elizabethan rhythm. Mr. Hardy, indeed, is a poet who often achieves music of verses, though he seldom achieves music of phrase.

We must, then, be grateful without niggardliness for the gift of his verse. On the larger canvas of his prose we find a vision more abundant, more varied, more touched with humor. But his poems are the genuine confessions of a soul, the meditations of a man of genius, brooding not without bitterness but with pity on the paths that lead to the grave, and the figures that flit along them so solitarily and so ineffectually.

[Robert Lynd]

A STUDY IN SURVIVAL.

"Raymond, or Life and Death: With Examples of the Evidence for Survival of Memory and Affection after Death." By Sir Oliver J. Lodge. (Methuen. 10s. 6d. net.)

We almost wish that Sir Oliver Lodge had confined the publication of his memorial of his son Raymond, who fell fighting in September, 1915, to the charming letters from the Front at Ypres with which it opens. They reveal Raymond for what we take him to be—a brave, competent, and enduring young man, the soul of that manly steadfastness and kindness which furnish much of the best stuff of the nation. To these moral qualities may fairly be added directness and clearness of mind and the instinct of command. His father declares him to have been a good physicist and mathematician, and a still better engineer. He clearly possessed the simplicity of mind which yields enjoyment of life, while his tastes in music and literature seem to have been those of most young men of his age. We gather that he liked acrostics and popular songs, and was happy in the companionship of his brother officers. Love of home and parents breathes in every page of his letters; humor and the gift of practical observation in not a few of them.

Here, therefore, were a character and life of which any father might be proud. After his death in the trenches, Sir Oliver Lodge set himself to solve, with the assistance of a number of mediums and their "controls," the question of their survival after death. He and his family were convinced of their success; and his readers have no reason to complain of the frankness of the voluminous records of these sittings. Our feeling is that they give to strangers no further knowledge of the Raymond of the letters. Those simple and manly outlines disappear; and the medium through which the new Raymond emerges seems to us to convey, not a personality, but (so far as it conveys anything at all) a shadowy suggestion of the "common form" of

The Times
LITERARY SUPPLEMENT.
LONDON, THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1916.

THE POETRY OF MR. HARDY.*

We are to-day watching breathless the most tremendous tragedy ever enacted on the stage of the world. We are not so close to it in England as they are in France, or Rumania, or Poland; but its footlights burn so fiercely that even from here we are conscious of their heat. The actors are the greatest of the nations, and the plot seems sometimes as if it were the doom of civilization. But that is only sometimes. As when we watch *Hamlet* or *Othello* our first feeling may be an agony of pity for those who seem to lose all, but our last is a sense that those who have such great experiences are of a higher and not of a lower order than other men, that as weighted in the ultimate scales of being they are perhaps rather to be envied than pitied, so in this world-drama we even now often have glimpses of what we know will be left burnt into our souls as the final truth, that the ultimate and abiding pity is not for the nations who are playing their awful parts in the tragedy, but for those who, by fate, or choice, or weakness, are not. Towards the criminal of the plot there will remain an abiding wrath; towards those who, at infinite cost, endurance of labour and pain and death, have stayed the crime and delivered the world, an eternal inheritance of sorrowing and wondering love; towards those who have refused the call, a pity too deep for anger, almost too deep for scorn.

With such a world-wide tragedy before us, can we care for the tiny and obscure tragedies of individual lives? Can we find a heart to be moved by him who of all living Englishmen has understood them best? That is the question this little book puts to us. It is true that Mr. Hardy is very far from being indifferent to the world tragedies either of the past or of the present. It is he who gave us the greatest effort the imagination has made to picture forth the tremendous drama of Napoleon; it is he who has written some of the best poems the present war has produced. But his great strength lies, as every one who saw the stage representation of *The Dynasts* instantly realized, not in his handling of the Nelsons and Napoleons, but in the amazing insight and sympathy with which he shows how the historic doings of kings and generals affect the private soldier, the citizen in his shop, the man behind the plough. The same thing may be seen in his poems about this war. It is not the doom of nations but the fate of individual lives, the man who goes, the woman who stays, which has best inspired him. So here his stanzas "In Time of 'the Breaking of Nations'" are not about the nations at all.

> Only a man harrowing clods
> In a slow silent walk,
> With an old horse that stumbles and nods,
> Half asleep as they stalk.
>
> Only thin smoke without flame
> From the heaps of couch grass;
> Yet this will go onward the same
> Though Dynasties pass.
>
> Yonder a maid and her wight
> Come whispering by:
> War's annals will fade into night
> Ere their story die.

There is Mr. Hardy, in his most constant, most entirely characteristic, note; far more than in the fine, and of course much more popular,

> What of the faith and fire within us,
> Men who march away
> Ere the barn cocks say
> Night is growing gray,
> To hazards whence no tears can win us?

He is a true Englishman, and neither his gravity nor his humour could have come from a man of any other nation. But the faith and fire that burn for national patriotism are a moment or an hour with him, not his habitual life. That is lived with the individual soul facing the destinies alone. Indeed, though in a manner the most national of our novelists, and even the most local, he is also the one to whose dramas locality and nationality matter least. In Scott, for instance, the tragedy itself is often born of the special historical or local conditions. His men and women are gloriously human, of course, or he would not be Scott; but the issues they have to face are frequently issues unknown to the common humanity of all times, issues that spring out of peculiar and temporary circumstances—the Forty-five, the Crusades, or whatever it may be. Mr. Hardy is as full of local colour in his way as Scott. He has put his Wessex before our eyes. His people's language and clothes, their labours and pleasures, are those of Wessex. But their fate has nothing local about it. Their tragedies turn on the loves and hates and sorrows that may be found among every people over all the earth. The fate that hangs over them so heavily is not that of men of Dorset or of England, but that of helpless atoms whirled they know not where in a vast and mysterious universe.

That is the world of the novels. And it is also the world of these poems. It is the fashion in certain quarters to-day to declare that, if an author is really intent on seeing life as it actually is and honestly resolved to record what he sees with absolute sincerity, he must be prepared to be ugly and his readers must be prepared to acknowledge that he is only paying the price of truth. Let those who are the victims of this ignorance go to Mr. Hardy. Never author held a sincerer pen. Never poet looked more unflinchingly in the full face of pain. And yet we have scarcely any writer, at any rate of prose, whose work leaves a more continuous impression of beauty. Why is that? Because he knows two things which some of his younger contemporaries either ignore or deny. He knows that words, if they are to be the instruments of literature, must be chosen, and set in an order which unites the mind of a whole people with the new, unique, and individual mind of the writer. And he knows that art must treat life so that it is seen both as the momentary event of to-day and as a link in the eternal procession of all time and all existence. The problem of the artist is to be at once individual and universal, to be at once original and in the great tradition, to be of his own day and yet of none or of all. He has to be true to what he sees, and yet not give us the mere raw material of truth which anybody can see, but that inner essence of it which is vital, representative, and permanent. He has to use language as the speech which he hears in the street and the speech which has been spoken and written for a thousand years. In the choice of his words and the shaping of his sentences he has to remember that he is at once a writer with something to say which should be said clearly and an artist with something to make which should be made beautifully.

None of our novelists has understood and fulfilled these functions better than Mr. Hardy. He has never allowed himself to write as if a photograph were a portrait or squeezing an orange the same thing as making

[illegible] creation as well as a record of fact. He is among the great masters of English prose—*ultimus Romanorum* some may sadly think, though they will certainly prove mistaken—a teller of great truth, a deviser of noble harmonies, a shaper of things beautiful.

But we are here concerned more immediately with his verse. No one will contend that it can rank for a moment with his prose. It is, in fact, always the poetry of a man whose natural way of utterance is not verse. The mind is everywhere the poet's mind, but the verse seldom flows abundantly, and scarcely ever with the ease of nature. Is is the verse of one who is a master in the matter of poetry but in its form only a very highly gifted amateur. Some gifts he has, indeed, which are rare among our brilliant young poets. He can meditate; he can brood over his matter, coo it, as it were, to us, till we find it singing in our minds if not exactly in our ears. He can go down quietly to the depths of his subject, treating it not as a thing for display of eloquence or cleverness, but as matter for pity, for love, for wonder, for wistful, uncomprehending acceptance.

This selection is divided into three parts: poems chiefly lyrical, poems narrative and reflective, and war poems and lyrics from *The Dynasts*. Except for a few narrative pieces, there is little to distinguish the second part from the first. Indeed, the subject is everywhere, even in *The Dynasts*, the same. It is man face to face with the destinies, our little moment of life rounded by two eternities of silence, and going on its way with the three questions in its heart—Whence? Whither? Why? The dominant note, especially in the short lyrics, is one of sadness; the almost ever-present subject is death. One of Mr. Hardy's volumes of stories has the title "Life's Little Ironies"; and in poetry as in prose that is his subject. Only that in his poems there is little or nothing of the cynicism hinted at in that title, or even of the rebellious impatience which underlies some of its stories. Poetry, in fact, discourages that temper. It lives in too large a world to imagine that the stray atoms to be seen from its parlour windows provide any adequate material for sitting in judgment on the system of the universe. It may take the way of hope and faith, or that of confessed and resigned ignorance, but it is not likely, if it have the largeness of vision without which it is no longer poetry, to take that of self-assured petulance. So here there is sadness enough, sadness almost everywhere: Mr. Hardy is no sprinkler of rose-water over ugly-smelling facts; but on the whole the mood is one of grave acceptance, or at least resignation, relieved sometimes by a wistful reaching after a hope and joy which he cannot get out of what he sees. The thrush in winter startles him first into wonder, and then into a surmise of something beyond wonder:—

> So little cause for carollings
> Of such ecstatic sound
> Was written on terrestrial things
> Afar or nigh around,
> That I could think there trembled through
> His happy good-night air
> Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
> And I was unaware.

The same note, and higher, is struck in what is perhaps the finest of his lyrics, the great hymn sung by the Pities in the last scene of *The Dynasts*:—

> And these pale panting multitudes
> Seen surging here, their moils, their moods,
> All shall "fulfil their joy" in Thee,
> In Thee abide eternally!
> Exultant adoration give
> The Alone through Whom all living live,
> The Alone, in Whom all dying die,
> Whose means the End shall justify!

And though the Spirit Ironic is given its right of reply—

> I know
> 'Tis handsome of our Pities so to sing
> The praises of the dreaming, dark dumb Thing
> That turns the handle of this Idle Show!

yet the very last word of the great drama is not with Irony, but with Faith:—

> But a stirring thrills the air
> Like to sounds of joyance there,
> That the rages
> Of the ages
> Shall be cancelled and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
> Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair!

That is what comes from living in the sense of the universal, as a poet must do.

(Turn over)

*SELECTED POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY. (Golden Treasury Series. Macmillan. 2s. 6d. net.)

It is all too easy to believe that everything is wrong with one's own happiness or one's neighbour's character, but it is not easy—it is in the long run nearly impossible—to believe, or to continue in the belief, that the universe as a whole has ultimately nothing to do with happiness or goodness. One may believe that a market town or a college is a place without heart or mind or meaning, but "I had rather believe all the fables in the Legend and the Talmud than that this universal frame is without a mind."

But these high questions, though they are nearly always felt behind and beneath, are not the surface subject of most of Mr. Hardy's poems. It is just our human life as he has seen it: and he is a poet because it has meant so much more to him than to the rest of us, moved him more, stirred him to more working both of heart and mind. Like Wordsworth, he brings so much with him that in his hands the ordinary at once becomes extraordinary, the small great, the old new. But he does not, like Wordsworth, "avert his eyes from half of human fate." His passion is sometimes joy:—

A day is drawing to its fall,
I had not dreamed to see
The first of many to enthrall
My spirit, will it be?

Or is this eve the end of all
Such new delight for me?

I journey home; the pattern grows
Of moonshades on the way;
"Soon the first quarter, I suppose,"
Sky-glancing travellers say.
I realize that it, for those,
Has been a common day.

But even here joy trembles for the future; and the joy that Mr. Hardy sees most often belongs to the past is become a memory at best, at worst a pain:—

They bear him to his resting place—
In slow procession sweeping by;
I follow at a stranger's space;
His kindred they, his sweetheart I.
Unchanged my gown of garish dye,
Though sable sad is their attire;
But they stand round with grieffess eye,
Whilst my regret consumes like fire!

So with the stanzas to Lizbie Browne, perhaps the thing most exactly characteristic of Mr. Hardy in this volume. They are a man's words to the woman he had failed to make his own:—

But, Lizbie Browne,
I let you slip;
Shaped not a sign;
Touched never your lip
With lip of mine,
Lost Lizbie Browne!

So, Lizbie Browne,
When on a day
Men speak of me
As not, you'll say,
"And who was he?—"
Yes, Lizbie Browne!

It is a page out of a Wessex novel; the comment on life of one who has seen it as a place of opportunities missed at once tragically and absurdly, and then remembered and almost regained by the creative power of the human heart. In half these poems the poet is living with the shadows of those whom he loved long ago and loves still:—

I idly cut a parsley stalk
And blew therein towards the moon;
I had not thought what ghosts would walk
With shivering footsteps to my tune.

They are for the most part the poems of an old man who has been thinking and feeling all his life, and as he draws towards its end finds memory the one ever-present faculty and the dead more alive than the living. Now and then, as in the lines about the Titanic disaster, "The Convergence of the Twain"—the luxurious ship and the "Shape of Ice" prepared by the Immanent Will to be her "sinister mate"—we get away to the world behind space and time which is the theme of the lyrics of *The Dynasts*, the theme of the invisible and universal side of the veil as it may be guessed at from the visible and particular. Much more often it is the other way. The poet and his friends, dead or living, are the actors; the scene is this earth; the time a moment of our passing day: only the day is known to be passing and action and actors part of an invisible, incomprehensible whole. And if the ghosts of the poet's forbears reproach him for being

A thinker of crooked thoughts upon Life in the sere,
And on that which consigns men to night after showing the day to them,

yet he will, after his fashion, respond to their calling to "take of life what it grants, without question." And certainly without selfish-

ness. For if, like Shelley, and in the course of a life almost three times as long, he has found that to him life's cup has been dealt in another measure than that given to those who can live smiling, yet he will make out of that another happiness which nothing can take away:—

Let me enjoy the earth no less,
Because the all-enacting Might
That fashioned forth its loveliness
Had other aims than my delight.

And some day hence, toward Paradise
And all its blest—if such should be—
I will lift glad afar-off eyes,
Though it contain no place for me.

Sheffield Daily Telegraph.
19. Oct. 1916.

THE POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY.

The importance of the publication in the Golden Treasury series of "Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy" (Macmillan: 2s. 6d. net) is that it will bring the verses within the reach of many readers of the Wessex novels who have hitherto been apt to regard Mr. Hardy's poems as a by-product of his genius. Even "The Dynasts," that massive work which coming generations will probably regard as one of the signal masterpieces of our age, has not met with full appreciation from Mr. Hardy's contemporaries, and, as for the smaller poems, perhaps they have hitherto had one reader for a hundred readers of "Tess" or "The Woodlanders." Yet the thought and attitude of Mr. Hardy are more explicitly revealed in the poems than in the novels, and with not less art; and the smaller poems are in a way even more expressive than "The Dynasts," for while that work embodies the ultimate vision of its author's intellect after its long wrestle with the eternal problems, in the lesser poems his intellect is in the grip of the wrestle itself.

It is the characteristic of these poems that they clearly display the bold outlines of themes that in the novels are filled in with so rich a human elaboration. The word "clearly" is the just one, for there is hardly a line among Mr. Hardy's verses that has to be read twice for the detection of its meaning. The language is simple—pure English, with hardly an alien element. Metrically, the poems are remarkably varied; but especially in the lyrical pieces the author betrays a keen and true sense of metrical beauty—there is no struggle after expression in an unfamiliar medium, but perfect ease and freedom. Mr. Hardy sometimes strains pronunciation of a word to meet his requirements, but that is the only flaw.

In all cases, however, the form is the creature of the subject and the art of the poem is but contributory to their message. Here, again, the fabric is simple; as in the novels, the author passes by way of the great simplicities of life to its great mysteries—to turn back from them, too often, baffled and heart-broken. His whole intellectual achievement has been the interweaving into infinite patterns of the two plain threads of love and death. Here, in the lesser poems, the patterns are not complex. Many of the poems are tiny tragedies of twenty lines or so, with the recurrent wonder as to why such things should be—what life can be worth when such episodes are among its everyday occurrences, almost unconsidered. A writer with so acute a sense of suffering, and whose attitude is one of bewilderment and weariness, is not cheerful; we know of no more melancholy poetry than that of this "crooked thinker of thoughts on Life in the sere," as he calls himself. But it is not irremediably melancholy; the author has his own vague safeguard against despair.

In "The Dynasts," it may be remembered, we are given a conception of the Eternal Power as blind, capricious, and utterly unmoved by mortal sorrows and agonies. Yet the closing note is one of Hope that things may be better than they seem. In the smaller poems the same idea recurs in more primitive terms. "It all looks hopeless enough to me," he seems to be constantly saying, "but I may be wrong, and others may be right. Sorrow and pain are certain, and hope uncertain; yet hope there must be." He takes an indefinite comfort from others—from the "faith and fire" of soldiers marching to war, from the placid enthusiasm of a rural choir, even from the peace of the graveyard. As a philosophy, Mr. Hardy's manner of thought is incomplete; but as an intellectual attitude, maintained with intense feeling, and expressed with marvellous art, it is as worthy of study as anything in the literature of our age. And in these poems it may be studied in its most direct and purest form.

Country Life
23rd December 1916

MR. THOMAS HARDY has well earned a place in the Golden Treasury Series, and *The Selected Poems* (Macmillan and Co.) have been chosen with knowledge and taste. Many people think of Mr. Hardy only as a poet of great imagination, but of so laboured a style that the inspiration is lost among the curious out-of-the-way vocables which he is in the habit of using. Those who know those poems intimately need no telling that this is wrong. Mr. Hardy has attempted many great things, and the very size of his greatest poetic work hinders rather than attracts the reader. In it with large machinery he works out a great philosophical exception, and in many of his short pieces he gives full rein to a cynicism inherent in his nature. But at best he is more than merely philosophical or cynical. He is a man of many moods, and his own doctrine about poetry is that it is an interpretation of the mood of the moment. Years have not brought to him that hardness which is one of their harsh and forbidding gifts. His sympathies, tenderness, sorrows, regrets, are as fresh and fine to-day as they were in his lusty youth. He has written nothing finer than the verses called "Beeny Cliff," which he wrote in 1913 after the death of his wife. Even if our readers are familiar with the poem it is worth their while to read it again:

O the opal and the sapphire of that wandering western sea,
And the woman riding high above with bright hair flapping free—
The woman whom I loved so, and who loyally loved me.

The pale mews plained below us, and the waves seemed far away
In a nether sky, engrossed in saying their ceaseless babbling say,
As we laughed light-heartedly aloft on that clear-sunned March day.

A little cloud then cloaked us, and there flew an irised rain,
And the Atlantic dyed its levels with a dull misfeatured stain,
And then the sun burst out again, and purples prinked the main.

—Still in all its chasmal beauty bulks old Beeny to the sky,
And shall she and I not go there once again now March is nigh,
And the sweet things said in that March say anew there by and by?

What if still in chasmal beauty looms that wild weird western shore,
The woman now is—elsewhere—whom the ambling pony bore,
And nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will see it nevermore.

"Beeny Cliff" does not stand alone in its class. There are other poems as tender. "At Castle Boterel," for example, contains an effort of imagination very like some of the visions which Mr. Hardy flashes on the reader in his prose. It, too, is a song of regret, and might have been included in a book of lost faces if anyone had the inspiration to write it. A fair young face seen in a crowd will occasionally produce that kind of impression.

It filled but a minute. But was there ever
A time of such quality, since or before,
In that hill's story? To one mind never,
Though it has been climbed, foot-swift, foot-sore,
By thousands more.

Naturally, the war songs will be read most at the present time, and after all that has been written there is nothing which gives greater promise of endurance than the first verses of Mr. Hardy's, written after the declaration of war. The burden of them abides in one's memory:

What of the faith and fire within us
Men who march away
Ere the barn-cocks say
Night is growing gray, ...

There is no nobler expression of the soldier's faith, although it is sober and subdued.

Press we to the field ungrieving,
In our heart of hearts believing
Victory crowns the just.

It is a poem fit to be placed side by side with "The Night of Trafalgar." "The Hussar's Song," sung to the tune of "Budmouth Dears," is in a very different key to the others, but it has some of that quality which made the "British Grenadiers" a favourite for all time.

Do they miss us much, I wonder,
Now that war has swept us sunder,
And we roam from where the faces smile to where the faces frown?
And no more behold the features
Of the fair fantastic creatures,
And no more *Clink! Clink!* past the parlours of the town?

Shall we once again there meet them?
Falter fond attempts to greet them?
Will the gay sling-jacket glow again beside the muslin gown?—
Will they archly quiz and con us
With sideway glance upon us,
While our spurs *Clink! Clink!* up the Esplanade and down?

Mr. Hardy concludes with "Last Chorus—the Semi-chorus of the Years." We may end this brief notice by quoting it as a voice of hope and faith suitable to the times in which we live:

CHORUS.

But—a stirring thrills the air
Like to sounds of joyance there
That the rages
Of the ages
Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair!

THE DAILY NEWS
JANUARY 26, 1917.

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.

By J. C. SQUIRE.

"Selected Poems." By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. Golden Treasury Series. 2s. 6d. net.

Most great novelists have tried to write verse. But, as a rule, it is vain to expect great poetry from them, or, at any rate, great lyric poetry. It is not a question of intellect nor, entirely, of the technique of expression; it is also a question of the prevailing habit of mind. The typical novelist is an acute observer, preoccupied with the daily life of the world; the typical poet is a dreamer. The novelist spends half his time registering fine shades of individual character; the poet tends to see Man, rather than men, Man erect under the stars rather than men eating biscuits. The novelist, watching the spectacle, usually forgets himself in his work; the poet is largely preoccupied with the workings of his own mind and emotions, and his personal relations with other people, with nature and with God. There are plenty of exceptions, but these statements are roughly true of the most typical figures. And as a man cannot easily keep two natures and two habits of mind going simultaneously for different purposes, you are likely to find with a novelist who is also a poet, either that his poetry is prosy or that his novels, however fine, are, as reflections of life, liable to peculiar distortions. Of all the English poet-novelists Emily Brontë and Mr Hardy are the two who have most consistently—though Emily Brontë left very little, that mostly imperfect—reached a high level of lyric power. And they are neither of them typical novelists. They could not, by virtue of their very poetic natures, be novelists of the highest rank. For their impulse, even when describing the lives of imaginary characters, is to unburden themselves of their own strong passions, to create an atmosphere uniform in tone with their own dominant moods. The magnificent melodrama, which is the secret both of the strength and of the weakness of "Wuthering Heights," is the direct outcome of Emily Brontë's capacity for poetry; the most glaring weaknesses of Mr. Hardy's finest novels, "Tess" and "Jude," are determined, unconsciously no doubt, by the non-rational poetic element in his nature. He is carried away from the truth by the intensity of his own feelings, that very intensity being the quality which, the gift for metrical expression being there, makes his lyrics some of the best of our time.

Short Stories in Verse.

It may be taken as additional evidence of the difficulty of working in both media, even if you have unusual faculties for both, that since Mr. Hardy left off writing novels his poetry has immensely improved, both in form and in substance. Whilst he was still primarily a novelist he was over-addicted to short stories in verse. They were better than poetical narratives which are not suffused by the author's philosophy; his passionate pessimism did often give them a "lift" that differentiated them from pedestrian verse novels. But they were too much dependent on plots, and on such unconvincing plots that they sometimes missed fire altogether, and made one laugh.

In the last fifteen or twenty years Mr. Hardy has become, in his shorter poems, more directly subjective; the relapse to compressed melodrama in "Satires of Circumstance" was such a failure that he does not reprint even one of them in this perfectly-chosen volume of selections. And he has become more and more master of his technique; he has digested his vocabulary, and got a grip on his rhythms. He writes more habitually now from personal experience; he speaks straight from the heart; his melancholy has an affecting tenderness that was never absent from it, but that was often obscured by the superficial brutality of his human diagrams. Probably there has actually been a modification in his outlook; Life pains him still, but does not so torture and exasperate him; even a glimmer of hope seems to have stolen in. It is not easy to imagine the old Thomas Hardy writing "The Oxen" (1914). As he sits with others round the hearth at midnight on Christmas Eve, someone remembers the legend that at that hour "the meek mild creatures" kneel in their "strawy pen":

So fair a fancy few would weave
  In these years! Yet, I feel,
If some one said on Christmas Eve,
  "Come, see the oxen kneel

"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
  Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
  Hoping it might be so.

The simplicity of the language is remarkable. Mr. Hardy is so entirely intent on what he has to say that many of his poems have an [illegible] air. Even where his craftsmanship is most complex, and he makes most effort to satisfy his ear, his language is frequently colloquial; but the intensity of his emotion lends dignity to almost any phrase, just as its rhythmic surge envelops and softens consonantal sentences that in almost any other writer would be cacophonous and irritating.

Great Poetry.

Almost all the finest poems in this book—exceptions must be made of "Friends Beyond" and a few others—come out of his last two books. The series of lyrics on a death (1912-3) would alone give Mr. Hardy a permanent place in English literature. "I Found Her Out There," "The Voice," "Where the Picnic Was," "The Phantom Horsewoman"—in which he recovers old memories with extraordinary vividness, and broods over them with heartrending poignancy of feeling—are, apart from anything else, great poetry. The end of "Where the Picnic Was" shows Mr. Hardy when he is employing least artifice:

Yes, I am here,
Just as last year,
And the sea breathes brine
From its strange straight line
Up hither, the same
As when we four came.
— But two have wandered far
From this grassy rise
Into urban roar
Where no picnics are
And one—has shut her eyes
For evermore.

It might almost, one feels, have been spoken right off; and it is worth remarking that Mr. Hardy is perhaps the only living poet who would think of introducing "picnic" into a lament, and that he does it with success because it does not occur to him to do anything else, since it is a picnic he is thinking of. His more constructed work cannot be better illustrated than from "The Ghost of the Past," where a stanza, of his own device, is used most beautifully. "We two kept house, the Past and I" . . .

As daily I went up the stair
  And down the stair,
I did not mind the Bygone there—
  The Present once to me;
Its moving, meek companionship
  I wished might ever be,
There was in that companionship
  Something of ecstasy.

It dwelt with me just as it was,
  Just as it was
When first its prospects gave me pause
  In wayward wanderings,
Before the years had torn old troths,
  As they tear all sweet things,
Before gaunt griefs had wrecked old troths
  And dulled old rapturings.

And then its form began to fade,
  Began to fade,
Its gentle echoes faintlier played
  At eve upon my ear,
Than when the autumn's look embrowned
  The lonely chambers here,
The autumn's settling shades embrowned
  Nooks that it haunted near. . . .

Anybody who is deaf to that will not be assisted by explanation.

Morning Post 27 Oct. '16.

Selected Poems.

Slowly but surely the bleak, faithful poetry, which is Mr. Thomas Hardy's antidote to all unreasoning optimism, is winning its way to a wider appreciation. Hitherto the poet in him has been overheard by a few rather than heard by the many for whom poetry is merely a literary entertainment, a relaxation from the stern logic of circumstance, a rest-cure from the obsession of realities. Now that the long days of illusion and evasion are at an end, his utterly unsentimental stuff—which so often has the vivid exactness and sad earnestness of Greek poetry—will count for more than all the manly-adventurous stories in verse and all the wonder-tales of a poetical world (to be reached through the magic casements of Keats or Rossetti's beryl-stone or by way of the Lake Isle of Innisfree) which is as remote from human life as the moon in a night of stars. Mr. Hardy has never set the magic of words and imagery above the truth as he sees it—and a part of his reward is that he often achieves a subtler and more haunting music than the poets who must be musical at any cost of sense and are sometimes, alas! little more than music-hall. His wise contempt for the privileges of the "popular" poet is expressed in the following lines:

Attentive eyes, fantastic heed,
Assessing minds, he does not need, ...

Well may he say in "He abjures Love":

I speak as one who plumbs
  Life's dim profound,
One who at length can sound
  Clear views and certain.
But—after love what comes?
  A scene that lours,
A few sad vacant hours,
  And then, the curtain.

But, if Life and Love be discomfortable even in retrospect, it is something to know that "peace comes dropping slow" in spite of all.

Cape Times 29th Dec. 1916

"The Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy" (Macmillan's Golden Treasury Series).

Twenty years ago one would have prophesied with confidence that Thomas Hardy's fame would be that of a novelist, and would rest upon his masterpieces of fiction, "Tess of the D'urbervilles," "The Return of the Native," "Far From the Madding Crowd." To-day it is at least open to question whether, in the years to come, he will not be better known as a poet, and whether "The Dynasts," that monumental drama in 130 scenes, will not be esteemed his finest achievement. Many of our greatest novelists have first wooed fame with more or less ambitious attempts in verse. Thomas Hardy has reversed the common order; he had gained general recognition as one of the two greatest living English novelists before he began to claim distinction as a poet. And it is surely an extraordinary achievement which, in such circumstances, has made it doubtful whether he is not a greater poet than novelist. Of one of our greatest novelists, George Meredith, it can be said with justice that, if he had confined his energies to poetry, he would have been one of our greatest poets; but of Sir Walter Scott's poetry it cannot be claimed that it compares favourably with his prose, though, had he never written a line of prose, his name as a poet would have been remembered. It has been left for Thomas Hardy to write what many competent critics regard as the greatest novel of one decade, and also what many others consider the greatest poem of the next. As one might expect from his peculiar temperament and philosophical outlook, Hardy's poetical genius inclines to the dramatic rather than to the lyrical. Great lyrics are the expression of rapture, and there is no tendency to rapture in Thomas Hardy. He has intense feeling, but its expression is confined by his sense of ultimate futility. For him life is a mistake, the consequences of which call for universal sympathy and individual fortitude. They alone are wholly blest who "fear no more the heat of the sun nor the furious winter's rages." All human endeavour is a forlorn hope, a foredoomed effort to escape the grip of an overwhelming destiny. He does not discourage the effort, he admires it as he would a brave attempt to fetch under fire a drink of water for a dying soldier; but his admiration does not blind him to the facts. One has seen it urged that his agnosticism is responsible for the depression that numbs his rapture; but one has only to quote Shelley and Swinburne to show that this contention is unsound. The difference lies in the fact that to Shelley and Swinburne life appeared pre-eminently worth living, even if it were in the last resort purposeless and bounded by death. Thomas Hardy has, if anything, more faith in human nature than either of them; but he believes that it would have been better for human nature if it had never existed.

This selection comprises over one hundred of his shorter poems, and enables one to appraise his capacity as a lyricist. Apart from the viewpoint which distinguishes them from the work of any other poet, they display a certain individuality in their rythm, and the words are selected with a deliberation almost worthy of Gautier. One of the most characteristic of the poems is "Shelley's Skylark." Shelley's most popular lyric was written in the vicinity of Leghorn, and there, nearly 70 years later, Thomas Hardy wrote the lines commencing:

"Somewhere afield here something lies
In Earth's oblivious eyeless trust,
That moved a poet to prophecies—
A pinch of unseen, unguarded dust:

Unlike many poets, he does not rail at the woman who fails to love him, but he chides her where she lacks charity. This is what he says of a broken appointment:

"You did not come,
And marching Time drew on and wore me numb.—
. . . .
Was it not worth a little hour or more
To add yet this: Once you, a woman, came
To soothe a time-torn man; even though it be
You love not me?"

Imagine what Byron would have said on the same theme.

The narrative poems, notably "The Burghers" and "Her Death and After," have an extraordinary intensity hinting at the powers which found full expression in "The Dynasts."

Of himself Hardy says, with a touch of irony,

"But sooner or later when you hear
That he has doffed this wrinkled gear,
Some evening, at the first star-ray,
Come to his graveside, pause, and say:

'Whatever his message—glad or grim—
Two bright-souled women clave to him;'
Stand and say that while day decays,
It will be word enough of praise."

These lines were written in his seventy-fifth year, and many of the finest of the lyrics in this collection were composed when he was in the neighbourhood of seventy years of age, indicating an extraordinary virility of mind.

Every lover of Thomas Hardy will naturally acquire this little book; to those who have yet to make his acquaintance as a poet one can commend it with the warning not to attempt to judge of his true place among English poets until they have read "The Dynasts." [illegible]

Guardian 16th Nov. 1916

. . . on the whole we should have valued this book more distinctly if it had contained longer and more important extracts than it does, from "Time's Laughing-stocks"—the volume in which Mr. Hardy's gift, alike as poet and narrator, finds to our thinking its [illegible] and most fortunate [illegible]

Saturday Review
21st October 1916

MR. HARDY'S MUSE.

"Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy." Golden Treasury Series. Macmillan. 3s. 6d. net.

PEOPLE have been heard to repeat that it is a pity Mr. Hardy "still goes on writing", whilst others repeat that it is a pity Mr. Hardy tries to write poetry, for prose is his metier. It is useless arguing with those who hold and advance firm prejudices of the sort. They will not understand what fine poetry is, and will not distinguish genius, the rarest thing, from talent, one of the commonest things on earth to-day. People who hold either of these firm prejudices, or both, need not trouble to cut the pages of this little Golden Treasury, stored with Mr. Hardy's magical lines, for it will leave them exactly where it found them. Mr. Hardy does not improve on acquaintance for those who cannot make his real acquaintance. Yet to the minority of readers who value verse, and recognise that, since the passing of Browning, Tennyson, and Swinburne, the authentic note of the great poet, of creative genius, would have been absent from our literature but for Hardy, may well add this book, even to a jealous and exclusive shelf where dwell the Muses. We by no means know the whole body of his poetry—though what we do know we have read often—and the lines on Shelley's skylark, for example, were new to us. Moreover, we did not know, or, having once known, had forgot, that the lark which breathed into Shelley the lyric divine sang over fields not of England but of Italy. Mr. Hardy's lines on that blithe spirit are addressed and dated: "The neighbourhood of Leghorn: March 1887": in a Golden Treasury of Hardy and the later nineteenth-century poets they might nicely be set next Browning's lines on the moulted eagle's feather and Shelley—

"And did you once see Shelley plain?"

They are exquisite, though we are far from confident we should have recognised in them the particular tone of Mr. Hardy had we lit upon them in some anonymous collection of verses.

This small, choice book is divided into three parts—namely, Poems, Chiefly Lyrical; Poems, Narrative and Reflective; War Poems, and Lyrics from "The Dynasts". In this last we meet again with the twelve small lines entitled "In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'", which the post brought one day not so long ago, as a happy surprise, to the office of this REVIEW, wherein they were first printed:

"Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by;
War's annals will fade into night
Ere their story die".

The smallest of lines, light as the down on the breast of a swallow, but of what quality to endure! Acquaintance with great and grave poetry like this warms into friendship, and this form of friendship can last through life.

There are various things in this slender, charming volume that we are pleased to have again; and, of the poems new to us, we especially like "The Darkling Thrush" (1900), the last few lines of which appear to be impregnated with the spirit of Wordsworth; but the chief treasure of it is held in the series of lines dated between December 1912 to March 1913 relating to Beeny Cliff—"The Going", "I Found Her Out There", "Without Ceremony", "The Voice", "A Dream or No", "After a Journey", "Beeny Cliff: March 1870—March 1913", "At Castle Boterel", and "The Phantom Horsewoman". The set appeared in quite a recent volume of Mr. Hardy's verse, and it has rightly been here reprinted. It forms a poignant and gravely beautiful sequence, and about it there is a certain *time-sense* which we do not know where we shall seek and find in such weight outside Shakespeare. We cannot forbear quoting Beeny Cliff, even for our own satisfaction: the gold here glisters, which is rare in Mr. Hardy:

I.

"O the opal and the sapphire of that wandering western sea,
And the woman riding high above, with bright hair flapping free—
The woman whom I loved so, and who loyally loved me.

II.

"The pale mews plained below us, and the waves seemed far away
In a nether sky, engrossed in saying their ceaseless babbling say,
And we laughed light-heartedly aloft on that clear-sunned March day.

III.

"A little cloud then cloaked us, and there flew an irised rain,
And the Atlantic dyed its levels with a dull misfeatured stain
And then the sun burst out again, and purples prinked the main.

IV.

"Still in all its chasmal beauty bulks old Beeny to the sky,
And shall she and I not go there once again now March is nigh,
And the sweet things said in that March say anew there by and by?

V.

"What if still in chasmal beauty looms that wild, weird western shore,
The woman now is—elsewhere—whom the ambling pony bore,
And nor knows nor cares for Beeny, and will see it never more."

What a reproof is here for those who hold that the author ought to have long ago ceased writing, and for those who hold that he ought to have been contented with prose!

Derry Journal
27th October 1916

"SELECTED POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY." London: MacMillan & Co., Ltd. Price, 2s 6d net.

Published in a size making it easy to handle and convenient to slip in the pocket, this newly-issued volume of the Golden Treasury series contains over 120 poems, divided into three sections: (a) chiefly lyrical; (b) narrative and reflective; (c) war poems and lyrics from "The Dynasts." Anyone who makes himself familiar with this collection may be said to possess a good knowledge of the most characteristic work, in versified form, of the veteran and distinguished author of "Far from the Madding Crowd." World-famed as a novelist, Thomas Hardy as a poet has had, at least until lately, a comparatively limited circle of readers. The author himself is said to have held many of his early poetical efforts in such low esteem that he destroyed them, though after perusing this volume we cannot imagine such a gifted literary craftsman turning out verse inartisticaly shaped, or lacking in insight. Even apart altogether from subject, the wonderful metrical variety which the poems in this book manifest makes it most interesting to the poetry lover. Again, there are invariably pleasing fluency and rare verbal musical quality inherent in the stanzas which flavour them with a distinctive charm, notwithstanding the sombre though truthful undertones heard in many of the lyrics. A wistful quality—a subdued sadness—is rarely absent, but it is always revealed with a stately simplicity, with naturalness, with felicity of phrase, grateful alike to eye and ear. Pines lay voiceless in unsown bundles, but when a tree was planted it started a-sighing, hearing which the planters became reflective. See how the author records the planters' thoughts—

Thus all unknowing
For whom or what
We set it growing
In this bleak spot,
It still will grieve here
Throughout its time,
Unable to leave here
Or change its clime;
Or tell the story
Of us to-day
When, halt and hoary,
We pass away.

Though, as we have hinted, Thomas Hardy's mood, revealed in divers poems in this volume, inclines him to see sad ...ions of the past "in vacant air," and to ...n to, in his own words, "that long ... human tears," yet he is always ... in the recital of his impres... ...l at times somewhat morbid, ...ynical.

Expository Times
January 1917

Thomas Hardy.

The poet is born, not made: Mr. Hardy is a poet. The pessimist is made, not born: Mr. Hardy is a pessimist. There is 'something wrong' in every poem of the *Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy* which Messrs. Macmillan have issued in their 'Golden Treasury' series (2s. 6d. net), but they are none the less poetical. What experience of life has darkened this writer's sky? What hope deferred? What faith unfought for?

Journal of Education
November 1916

Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy. (2s. 6d. net. Macmillan.)

Whether Matthew Arnold will live in memory as a poet or a writer of prose is still a disputed point among critics. In the case of Thomas Hardy no such question is likely to arise. Before his latest and greatest work, *The Dynasts*, few even of the reading public were aware that he wrote verse at all. The length of that epic drama has confined his audience to the "fit, though few." Yet we welcome this latest volume of the "Golden Treasury Series," which will make the poet known to numbers who were familiar with Thomas Hardy only as the Wessex novelist, the author of *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *Far from the Madding Crowd*, and the unforgettable *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

Poetry was not with Mr. Hardy a second nature. He did not, like Pope (and Ovid before him), "lisp in numbers," but, as he tells us himself, he "practised writing in verse from 1860 to 1868," while still an architect serving under Sir A. Blomfield—a practice that he "resumed later." At the same period he "read Latin and Greek with a fellow-pupil," but the impression left on him by this study was faint and is hardly perceptible. We might safely guess that he had studied Shelley and Swinburne even without the tribute he pays to these poets of the last century; but of the poetry of Greece and Rome there is hardly an echo. The one note in the volume refers us to Hor. Epis. i, 12, but without it we should fail to recognize Horace in

Why the All-mover,
Why the All-prover,
Ever urges on and measures out the droning tune of things.

Of poets ancient and modern the one to whom he shows the closest affinity is undoubtedly Lucretius; but there is no verse that recalls the "rise and long roll of the hexameter"—the golden work that wooed the passionless bride, divine Tranquillity." His ghostly world is still the world of the *Odyssey*, the ἀμενηνὰ κάρηνα, whose voice is shrill and weak as that of bats. None, either dead or living, bids us "faintly trust the larger hope."

Yet, as in the Wessex romances, despair itself is mild, and now in a vignette, now in an epithet, we have glimpses of pastoral life and woodland ways that made the early romances a household word. The narrative poems are nearly all of them tragic: of love frustrate or deceived; of infinite passion, and a heart that yearns for the impossible. But the poet himself never rails or utters one complaint; the earth as he sees it is very good, and he is content to look around him and view the pageant as it passes. The world is a comedy to those who think. We would gladly have quoted one of the longer poems—for instance, *The Souls of the Slain*—but must content ourselves with a shorter specimen, *The Division*:

Rain on the windows, creaking doors,
With blasts that besom the green;
And I am here, and you are there,
And a hundred miles between!

O were it but the weather, Dear,
O were it but the miles,
That summed up all our severance,
There might be room for smiles!

But that thwart thing betwixt us twain,
Which nothing cleaves or clears,
Is more than distance, Dear, or rain,
And longer than the years!

Books of the Day

The Poetic Goal of Thomas Hardy

Little Volume of His Collected Verse Shows the Remarkable and Versatile Genius of the Great Novelist

By E. F. E.

ALTHOUGH Mr. Hardy had dabbled in the writing of verse for many years it was not until about 1895 that he determined to make poetry his literary goal. He as then at the height of his career as a ovelist, and he apparently was to give us ction which in succession to "The Woodnders," "The Return of the Native," and ess of the D'Urbervilles," would even ore firmly establish his fame. Almost ithout warning we suddenly learned that The Well Beloved" and "Jude the Obure" were to be his final prose message, d since then, with the exception of the lumes of scattered short stories which as published some years ago under the le of "The Changed Man," he has given e world nothing but verse.

To say that Mr. Hardy has firmly estabhed himself among the leaders of Engh poetry during the past twenty years is exaggeration. As he was, and is, a der among English novelists, so is he w also a leader among English poets. ny of us regret the change in his litary ideals which has deprived the world other great novels, but we must accept inevitable. Mr. Hardy, both as poet d as novelist, displays the same charteristics. His purpose in verse and in se is identical. He is the apostle of man fatality. To him the things of life irrevocable. Man and woman are in sway of an implacable destiny. They y struggle against it—and it is this uggle that almost invariably forms the me of his longest novel and his shortest em—but the outcome is not theirs to demine. They are powerless. They are ither the masters of their fate nor the ptains of their souls. It is Mr. Hardy's rpose to weld this philosophy of an unanging and unalterable dominance into erything he writes. Some might call it d, but that is not Mr. Hardy's name for In nothing that he has written is he exponent of the Christian theory of the wer that controls mankind.

The form and not the substance of Mr. ardy's writing has changed since he rned poet. He is still the same arbiter of man fate. It is only the method of his pression that has changed; he has merely eferred to voice his theories in a more mpact and more formal manner. In enty-five years he wrote seventeen lumes of novels and short stories; in enty years he has written four volumes poems and one long poetic drama. His Wessex Poems" was issued in 1898, and was followed at considerable intervals by Poems of the Past and Present," "Time's aughingstocks" and "Satires of Circumance," with "The Dynasts" coming in the dst of them as his dramatic conception a vast panorama of European history. this way, from the most discussed of nglish novelists, Mr. Hardy has easily ade himself the most discussed of Engh poets.

Now as a summary of and tribute to his etic achievement comes a little volume the Golden Treasury Series containing e "Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy." mong many great names in this ries his is the only name of a writer o is living and working. All the rest e of the past; he is of the present, and it no little distinction for him to find his y into the familiar little blue-covered oks whose view of world literature exnds all the way from Theocritus to Ten-

Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy. London: cmillan & Co., Ltd.

nyson. And the poems by which he is represented are of a period of half a century, ranging from the year 1866 almost to the present hour. Some are dated and some are not, and there is one poem that bears the dual date of 1887-1896. Divided into three sections, the volume reveals Mr. Hardy as the writer of "Poems Chiefly Lyrical," "Poems Narrative and Reflective" and "War Poems, and Lyrics from 'The Dynasts.'"

It is obvious to anyone who knows him only through his novels, as well as to those who have intimate acquaintance with his verse, that Mr. Hardy considers rhythm one of the attributes of true poetry, and that he does not overlook the effective uses of rhyme. He is a master of many metres, and it is apparent that to him the soul of poetry lies as much in its form as in the thoughts that give life to the form. We find him here a master of the lyric, although so great in his passion for studying human problems that the lyrics in this collection are few and far between. The best known of them is, of course, "When I Set Out for Lyonnesse," but more in the spirit of his novels and their characters is "A Merrymaking in Question."

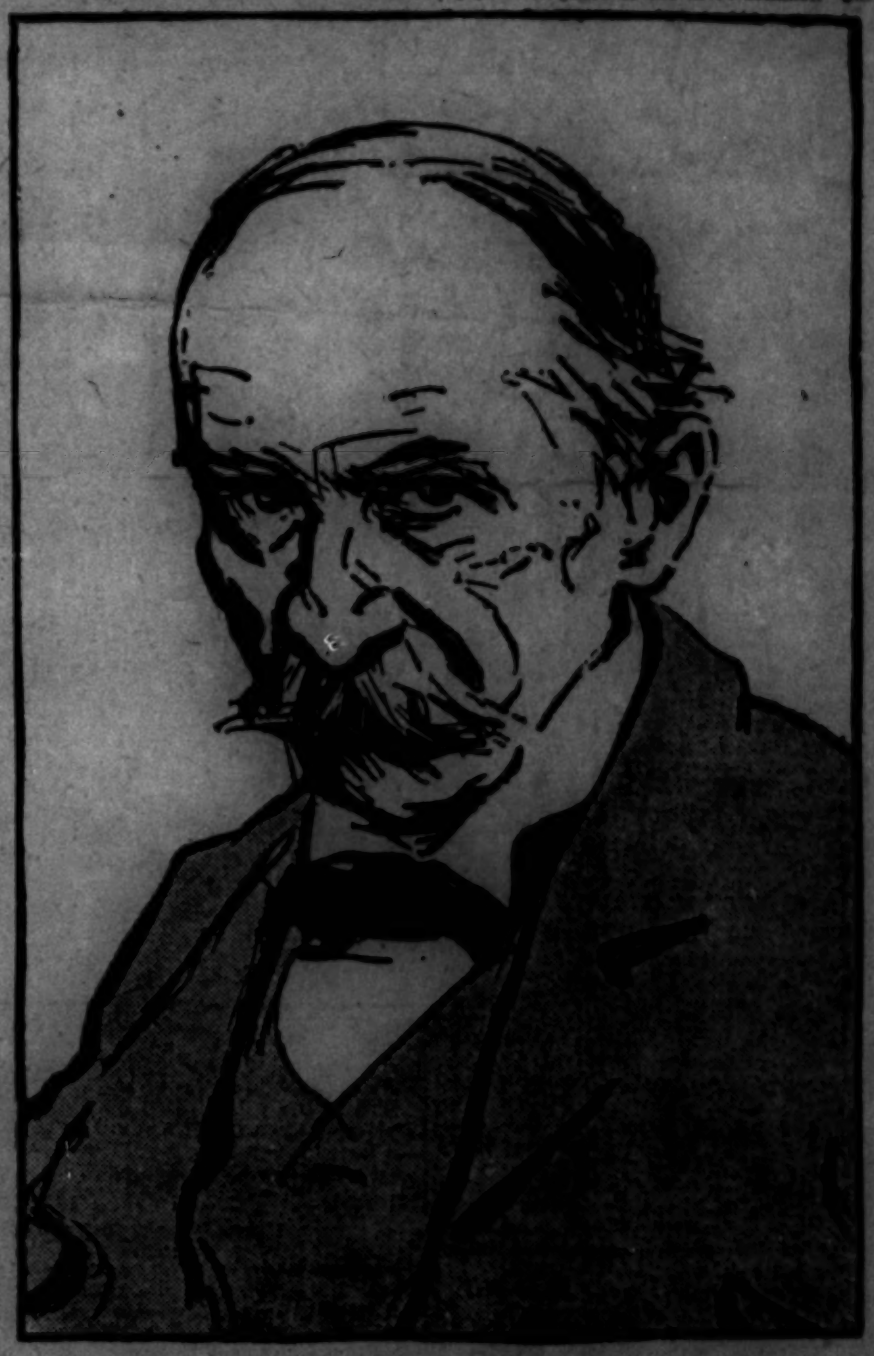
"I will get a new string for my fiddle,
And call to the neighbors to come,
And partners shall dance down the middle
Until the old pewter-wares hum,
And we'll sip the mead, cyder and rum!"

From the night came the oddest of answers:
A hollow wind, like a bassoon,
And headstones all ranged up as dancers,
And cypresses droning a croon,
And gargoyles that gushed to the tune.

We have only to note the form "gargoyles" in place of the more common "gargoyles" to understand the verbal sensibility that is constantly alive in Mr Hardy's writing of either prose or verse.

With him the desire to tell a tale is always present. It may be the tale of a momentary impulse of the heart, or a story of many years, but he is always able to condense it into a few lines or stanzas. And in all these pictorial quality is supreme. In "One We Know" he tells, for instance, the retrospective story of almost a lifetime:

She told how they used to form for the country dances—
No grief at all,



Thomas Hardy
From a Drawing by Simpson

"The Triumph," "The Red-Shirted Ship"...
To the light of the guttering wax in the old-fo
And in vote to the blink of a dip.

She spoke of the wild "possessing" and "wife-
On carpet, on oak, and on mat;
And the two long rows of ladies and gentlem
And the figures the couples trod.

She showed us the spot where the maypole
yearly planted,
And where the bandsmen stood
While breathed and hummed partners whirl
and panted
To choose each other for good.

She told of that far-back day when they
astounded
Of the death of the King of France;
Of the Terror; and then of Bonaparte's
bounded
Ambition and arrogance.

Of how his threats woke warlike preparations
Along the Southern strand,
And how each night brought rumours and rep
tations
Last morning should see him land.

She said she had often heard the gibbet creaking
As it swayed in the lightning flash,
Had caught from the neighboring town a dis
child's shrieking
At the cart-tail under the lash. . . .

With cap-framed face and long gaze into the
embers—
We seated around her knees—
She would dwell on each dead themer, not of
one who remembers,
But rather as one who sees.

She seemed one left behind of a band gone
distant
So far that no tongues could hail;
Past things retold were to her as things existent,
Things present but as a tale.

The sombre things of life and death, the thought of the future and eternity are seldom absent from these poems. Such is Mr. Hardy's perpetual mood, and such is the mood in which he can best give expression to himself even when he is speaking with another's voice. He writes a woman's plaint "At His Funeral":

They bear him to his resting place—
In slow procession sweeping by:
I follow at a stranger's space:
His kindred they, his sweetheart I.
Unchanged my gown of garish dye,
Though sable-clad is their attire:
But they stand round with grieftess eye,
Whilst my regret consumes like fire!

And what could be more fitting to the tale than the crispness of the short lines that form "I Found Her Out There":

I found her out there
On a slope few see,
That falls westwardly
To the salt-edged air,
Where the ocean breaks
On the purple strand,
And the hurricane shakes
The solid land.

I brought her here,
And have laid her to rest
In a lonesome spot
Yet one loved best.
She will never be shrived
In her loamy cell
By the waves long heard
And loved so well.

So she does not sleep
By those haunted heights
The Atlantic smites
And the blind gales sweep,
Whence she often would gaze
At Dundagel's fair head,
While the dipping blaze
Dyed her face fire-red.

And would sigh at the tale
Of sunk Lyonnesse,
As a wind-tugged tear
Flapped her cheek like a flail;
Or listen at whiles
With a thought-bound brow
To the murmuring miles
She is far from now.

Yet her clods, maybe,
Will creep underground
Till it reach the sound
Of that eastern sea
As it scrolls and soks
Where she once dominied,
And joy in its broths
With the heart of a child.

Perhaps after all this little volume will reconcile us to Thomas Hardy the poet. We are not told whether the emotion is his own or another's, but it is always made and carefully arranged, and it shows every sign of coming from his own

Saturday Review

III.

Exhibitors Times

SVENSKA DAGBLADET

STOCKHOLM SÖNDAGEN DEN 2 SEPTEMBER 1917

5

Thomas Hardy och hans senaste diktsamlingar.

Af August Brunius.

I.

Vid ett par tillfällen under dessa krigsår har nestorn bland engelska poeter och den ende kvarlefvande af de victorianska storheterna Thomas Hardy fäst uppmärksamheten på sig. Han har annars omgifvits af en stillhet som knappast är af denna världen och ännu mindre af denna tiden — en stillhet som kommit alltför många att glömma bort att han alltjämt är bland de lefvande och, mer än det, i besittning af sin fulla skapande kraft. Han har emellertid, som många af sina bröder i Apollo, skrifvit en krigsdikt Men who march away — men hvilken krigsdikt! Dess dämpade, halfgnolade sång drunknar i allt larmet kring de moderna tyrtéerna; morgonstillheten i hvilken soldaterna draga förbi

Ere the barn-cocks say
night is growing gray

har gifvit dikten dess milda gråhet, dess utsläkta ljusdunkel, som dock icke saknar en glimt af en dold eld, "the fire and faith within us". Det är en sida af Hardy: den behärskade värmen, det förnämt sobra i uppträdandet, frånvaron af all reklamaktig gestikulation. En annan sida af hans utprägladt manliga natur gör sig gällande i en tidigare dikt från samma år, liksom den nämnda krigsdikten tryckt i hans senaste diktsamling Satires of Circumstance. Där ges en stöt mot alla goda optimisters framstegstanke. Uppslaget i Channel firing är krigsfartygens öfningskanonad vid kusten som har den humoristiska effekten att väcka upp de slumrande döda: de tro att det är Yttersta dagen och vilja resa sig, men hejdas af Guds röst:

"no;
It's gunnery practice out at sea
Just before you want below;
The world is as it used to be:

All nations striving strong to make
Red war yet redder."

Profetiska rader! Det dröjde icke ett halft år tills deras sanning blef fullt uppenbar: red war yet redder.

Slutligen hände det för någon tid sedan att det gafs i London en uppläsning med skådespelares medverkan af Hardys dramatiska epos The Dynasts, ett jätteverk i bunden form öfver Napoleontidens plågade och sargade och sensuelle Europa. Anledningen var naturligtvis den andliga aktualitet som denna helt oväntadt fått genom histo-

riens eviga upprepning. Men uppläsningen gaf också tillkänna diktarens enastående förmåga af poetisk arkitektur, hans majestätiska kraft att förbinda en oändlighet af trådar till ett öfverskådligt mönster, att böja tusen röster och ljud till en symfonisk enhet. The Dynasts är hans ålderdoms stora verk, förvånande, stundom frånstötande i sin realism, i grunden icke poetiskt, men uppenbarande en mäktig personlighet i hvarje scen och hvarje rad.

The Sunday Times
(Johannesburg)
February 18th 191

Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy

It is delightful to be able to take up a volume of real poetry in these days when strings of rhymes, inspired by the war, abound in greater numbers than ever before: it is alike refreshing and satisfying. The book in question comes from the pen of Mr. Thomas Hardy, Britain's greatest living novelist, and one of her greatest masters of the lyric art. A selection of his poetry—a hundred-and-twenty numbers all told—has been gathered together by Messrs. Macmillan, and has been included by them in their Golden Treasury Series, which is published at a price which should ensure an enormous popularity—half-a-crown net. Binding, printing and paper are worthy of the work.

The volume is divided into three parts. The first is devoted to "Poems Chiefly Lyrical"; the second is made up of "Poems Narrative and Reflective"; and "War Poems and Lyrics for 'The Dynasts'" make up the third part. These three parts enable us to appreciate Mr. Hardy in all of his many moods. Sometimes he is lightly contemplative; mostly he is sombrely meditative, but, whatever the mood, he always strikes the true poetic spark. Often he finds inspiration in a favourite theme of his—the ironie, as in "Lizbie Brown"; at other times he is purely and delightfully pastoral, as in the poem "In a Wood," revised after an interval of nine years. Again we find him living in the past, solacing himself with memories of loved ones gone before, as in "The Going," "Amabel" and "Her Death and After." Next he passes to heroic mood, and occasionally to the narrative, but always is he scholarly and sincere, and always is he the thinker.

The subject matter is aptly described by A. Shadwell in the current issue of Country Life, as follows:

"Mary, worn with grief and fear, covers her emaciated face with scarred hands, as he kneels in prayer before the infant Jesus. Joseph, grown old and feeble, nails up a barricade of planks to strengthen the door against the missiles of Kultur already bursting through it and threatening the sleeping child. So it is that first Christmas,

hristmas of Kultur"

(By Courtesy of Country Life)

nineteen centuries ago, he saved Mary's child from the baby-massacre ordered by Herod to preserve his own throne.

"Kultur, the gathered wisdom of the ages, has brought us back to the same Holy War. What a Christmas. What a festival of peace and good will towards men!

"People ask: 'Why does God allow it? Is God dead?' Foolish questions. When I was at school I had the good fortune to be under a great teacher, whose name is honored today. He used to tell us that the most terrible verse in the Bible was, 'he gave them up unto their own hear lust and they walked in their own cou sels.' (Ps, lxxxi. 13.)

"Man has the knowledge of good a evil: he has eaten of the tree and insi on going his own way. He knows best. not this the age of science and Kultur? must not cry out if the road we ha chosen leads to disaster.

"Yet still the Child of Christmas liv and a divine light shines around his he He sleeps."

---

part'cular station. I have a home-made working model playing thirteen notes on the rotor—do, mi, sol, la, si, do, re, mi, fa, l, la, si, do."

Those who have heard it agree that it is al music. Chords are produced by pressing two or three keys, and if the feeding transformer can supply the necessary power we have surprising results and pleasant

in the Indian Ocean a hundred miles from land. From this we may infer that it had been taken on board at the last port of call, and remained concealed either on the deck or in the rigging, until it at last revealed itself as a "stowaway."

Electrically Treated Crops

For several years experiments on the

squall, although Bryan was down twice by McKinley and once by Taft.

In 1904 the guinea hen did not ta much interest in politics, by reason the fact that Parker failed to enthu her as Bryan had done, but when t three-cornered fight between Wilso Taft and Roosevelt got well under w she renewed her party affiliations, a

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The Keyboard Management

And we laughed light-heartedly aloft on that clear-sunned March day.

Moments of Vision

THE NEW STATESMAN DECEMBER 15, 1917

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS

Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses. By THOMAS HARDY. Macmillan. 6s. net.

It has not been until quite recently that any of the greater of our writers have chosen to exercise themselves with equal effort in both prose and verse. And with any such writer it is always interesting to observe comparatively how his genius flows in each of the two channels. With a writer at once so "atmospheric" and so laborious as Mr. Hardy, it would seem inevitable that prose should prove the better medium. The spaciousness, the quieter tone, and the more detailed method of the novel allow him to secure his effects by patience and hard work. He is able to build up his impression gradually by epithet after epithet, paragraph after paragraph; and to amplify what he has said as the picture grows firmer in his mind with being worked on. His greatest novels are specimens of this kind of atmospheric impression; they are huge, elaborately worked landscapes in which, at their greatest, the characters are no more than points of definite colour placed so as to guide the eye. But in verse this patient workmanship is forbidden its opportunity. The effect must be gained, comparatively speaking, at a single stroke; and if the author—to take a parallel from impressionist painting—uses the method of complementary colours, he must lay on his pigments in lines, not in chapters. One of the chief virtues of verse lies in its concentration; but Mr. Hardy's novels disregard length if only the desired sensation can be communicated. Yet the poems seem to have the same feeling as the novels and to express it in an intenser form.

A tentative solution may be offered for this problem. No one does, no one could, take down for the first time a volume of Mr. Hardy's poetry and enjoy any single poem in it, even one of the best, as it ought to be enjoyed. His poems are members of one another; and the reader must know them all before he can properly appreciate any one. It is only rarely that Mr. Hardy writes a poem which can be called perfect in the sense that the lyrics of Shelley, for example, or the sonnets of Milton are perfect. He is heavily handicapped against doing so. He has a diction which, if it be irreverent to call it grotesque, is certainly somewhat out of the common run of English verse; and his ingenuity in the matter of stanza-forms makes a double-edged compensation for the irregularity of his ear when judging the rhythm of single lines. It is his temperament that matters; and this is revealed inadequately in separate poems, but tremendously in the complete series.

The present volume simply extends this series; and, indeed, it would be absurd now to expect any serious change in Mr. Hardy. It is true that his last two collections did show a small but perceptible and surprising advance in technique and diction, while this does not, which may suggest that many of these pieces have been retrieved from early times. But any advance in smoothness which Mr. Hardy may have made or any retrogression is really not much more than an incidental curiosity. The important fact is that these poems are true Hardy and add considerably to the mass from which we must draw our impressions of that temperament.

The most devoted admirers of Mr. Hardy, of course, are the persons the least fitted to criticise him justly or clearly. The lovers of Wordsworth, when he was a disputed poet, used to feel a thrill on reading *We are Seven*, and lovers of Mr. Hardy will unquestionably be thrilled by a very characteristic new poem called *The Robin*, which begins:

> When up aloft
> I fly and fly,
> I see in pools
> The shining sky,
> And a happy bird
> Am I, am I!

and continues:

> When winter frost
> Makes earth as steel,
> I search and search,
> But find no meal,
> And most unhappy
> Then I feel.

and concludes:

> But when it lasts
> And snows still fall,
> I get to feel
> No grief at all,
> For I turn to a cold stiff
> Feathery ball.

But the undoubted thrill which that poem communicates to the genuine enthusiast has no connection with its independent merit, which is small, and very little with its significance in the whole poetical work of its author, where it is a background stroke, playing its part so long as it is not too closely examined. There are in this volume others of the same kind. There is, for example, a poem called *Royal Sponsors*, in which a noble couple, who have induced the king and queen to stand god-parents to their child, find it dead on the morning of the ceremony. But so as not to disappoint the royal guests, they allow the corpse to be christened. There is another, *The Statue of Liberty*, in which the speaker sees a man washing a statue in a city square and asks him whether he does it for pay or for love of liberty. The man replies that his dead daughter stood as model for the figure, and that "In love of the fame of her, and for the good name of her, I do this for her sake." The speaker does not answer, but closes the poem by remarking that he was the carver of the statue and that the model "held so saintly . . . in the dens of vice had died." There are many of us who will take a huge and genuine pleasure in such pieces as these; but this does not mean that they are very good, nor should we allow ourselves to be deluded into thinking that they are. It means only that Mr. Hardy's personality, working through the whole bulk of his poems, has so seized our spirits that its most extravagant manifestations seem attractive because they are the most characteristic. These alone would not have seized our spirits; but even they have their place in the total impression produced by the book.

It is, of course, impossible to give a proper idea of this impression by quoting here and there the most beautiful poems, stanzas or lines. It is not always in the most beautiful or the most detachable pieces that Mr. Hardy's genius comes to flower. Yet there are lovely and quotable things in the book, such as *Joys of Memory*:

> When the spring comes round and a certain day
> Looks out from the brume by the eastern copse trees
> And says, Remember,
> I begin again as if it were new,
> The life of that date I once lived through,
> Whiling it hour by hour away;
> So shall I do till my December,
> When Spring comes round.
>
> I take my holiday then and my rest
> Away from the dun life here about me,
> Old hours re-greeting
> With the quiet sense that bring they must
> Such throbs as at first, till I house with dust,
> And in the numbness, my heartsome zest
> For things that were, be past repeating
> When Spring comes round.

There are such poignant things as *At the Word "Farewell,"* where the lover determines to part with his mistress, but is drawn back to her at the last moment:

> "I am leaving you . . . Farewell!" I said,
> As I followed her on
> By an alley bare boughs overspread;
> "I soon must be gone!"
> Even then the scale might have been turned
> Against love by a feather,
> —But crimson one cheek of hers burned
> When we came in together.

But perhaps the tone and feeling of the book and of all Mr. Hardy's poetry are represented as fully and as justly as they can be in any one piece by *At Middlefield Gate in February*:

> The bars are thick with drops that show
> As they gather themselves from the fog
> Like silver buttons set in a row
> And as equally spaced as if measured, although
> They fall at the feeblest jog.
>
> They load the leafless hedge hard by,
> And the blades of last year's grass,
> While the arable ridges turned up nigh
> In brown lines, clammy and clogging lie—
> Too clogging for feet to pass.
>
> How dry it was on a far-back day
> When straws hung the hedge and around,
> When amid the sheaves in amorous play
> In curtained bonnets and light array
> Moved a bevy now underground!

This is not the highest level of his book. It is the middle term of a mass of astonishing poetry.

The Outlook
Dec. 22. 1917

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

MOMENTS OF VISION AND MISCELLANEOUS VERSES. By Thomas Hardy. (London: Macmillan. 6s. net.)

THE future historian of our contemporary literature will not fail to note a new epoch in English poetry, dating from the time when Mr. Thomas Hardy's verse was authoritatively recognised as possessing the intrinsic poetic quality. Fifty years ago such poetry would have been accounted "impossible"; to-day it has many imitators, alike of its tone and its technique. Its essential modernity consists of its acceptance of the commonest and ugliest objects of life as the material for poetry; it actually anticipated the fashion for choosing iron bedsteads and chipped tooth-mugs as subjects for the painter's art. Its method accords with its theme. Though not without fluttering glimpses of beauty, and broken strains of melody, it expresses itself for the most part in a series of cacophonies, which set at defiance all the old standards of prosody and harmony. It has effected, in short, a revolution both in poetic tone and poetic feeling; and if, as seems likely from the increasing tide of Mr. Hardy's discipleship, this fashion is to be largely the fashion of the future, then the whole conception of what poetry should be will have to be critically reconstructed to meet the necessities of the case.

Mr. Hardy's new book is typical of his poetic temperament. It is less bitter, perhaps, than *Satires of Circumstance*, but it is completely and depressingly disillusioned. Its vision is of a world where every lute is riven, and every fruit infected with the pitted speck. Where two or three are gathered together, there is always a spectral visitant in the background. Black Care rides behind the horseman; and Despair whispers in the ear of youth.

"Nay: it's not the pale Form your imagings raise,
That waits on us all at a destined time,
It is not the Fourth Figure the Furnace showed;
O that it were such a shape sublime
In these latter days!
It is that under which best lives corrode;
Would, would it could not be there!"

The lesson of life is one of repeated disillusionment. Blind obstinacy hinders Youth from profiting by the experience of Age. It is Youth that pays the penalty, and Age is left mourning.

"This, then, is the grave of my son,
Whose heart she won! And nettles grow
Upon his mound; and she lives just below.

"How he upbraided me, and left
And our lives were cleft, because I said
She was hard, unfeeling, caring but to wed.

"Well, to see this sight I have fared these miles,
And her firelight smiles from her window there,
Whom he left his mother to cherish with tender care!

"It is enough. I'll turn and go;
Yes, nettles grow where lone lies he,
Who spurned me for seeing what he could not see."

It is inevitable that an eye, so keenly fixed upon the ironies of circumstance, should see little in war but its needless waste and sacrifice; and here at any rate Mr. Hardy will have more sympathisers than in some of his gloomier prognostications. For the world is beginning to learn the truth about War. The whole universe groans and travails under the heel of the phantom Rider.

"Maybe that 'More Tears!—
More Famine and Flame—
More Severance and Shock!'
Is the order from Fate
That the Rider speeds on
To pale Europe; and tiredly the pines intone."

The pitiful part of it is that the poet is unable to lift up his heart to any of the fresh aspirations of hope and energy. He is so out of patience with Fate that the whole of humanity presents itself to his imagination as a struggling mass of inarticulation,—an ant-heap alive with purposeless movement. He speaks his own epilogue with sure self-analysis.

"If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last,
they stand at the door,
Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
'He was one who had an eye for such mysteries'?

"And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,
'He hears it not now, but used to notice such things'?"

It is very certain that he has an eye for many mysteries, and notices a thousand things that the old-fashioned poet would have overlooked. But whether his interpretation of Life and Death has the true vision of poetry, the quality of endurance, the vitality of the seer—that must be left for the judgment of posterity to decide.

Justice 10 Jan. 1918

Mr. Hardy's New Poems.

"Moments of Vision," by Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan & Co., St. Martin's Street, W.C. 2.) 5s. 6d. net.

For a long time no great star has appeared in the skies of poetry. Most of us are, just now, observing a perfect galaxy or milky-way of minor luminaries, the soldier-poets of the last two or three years. A man may have written verses before he went to the war, or he may not: any stanzas that he sends from the trenches have an interest for us, whether he writes about what he feels and does there, or merely sings about the country-side he has left. Anything that casts a light on the psychology of the modern soldier is important; and there is a whole world of feeling which can only be expressed in verse—thoughts, impressions and sensations which somehow are only to be captured and uttered in rhythm and rhyme.

Mr. Hardy, however, is one of the fixed stars, and unquestionably our greatest living English poet. To many readers he is better known as a novelist; and indeed, although he has been writing poems for nearly half-a-century, none of these were collected and published till within the last twenty years. That magnificent epic-drama of the Napoleonic wars, "The Dynasts," was preceded by one volume of verse, "Wessex Poems," and followed by another, "Time's Laughing-Stocks." This volume, with its curious bitter name, its dramatic ballads such as the "Tramp Woman's Tragedy" and "In Pydel Vale," its beautiful lyrics such as "The Darkling-eyed Gentleman" and "Julie-Jane," and its many brief, strange philosophic poems, appears so far to be the high-water mark of Mr. Hardy's genius. The two succeeding volumes, "Satires of Circumstance" and "Moments of Vision" are less striking; they seem rather to be examples of what Bacon would call "drylight"; and certainly they are in some respects curiously like Bacon's own Essays. Some of these short poems are the most astonishing examples of directness of thought, clearness, concentration and subtle suggestion that exist in English verse. Consider, for instance, "The Masked Face" in "Moments of Vision":

"I found me in a great surging space,
At either end a door,
And I said: 'What is this giddying place
With no firm-fixed floor,
That I knew not of before?'
'It is Life,' said a mask-clad face.

I asked: 'But how do I come here
Who never wished to come;
Can the light and air be made more clear,
The floor more quietsome,
And the doors set wide? They numb
Fast-locked, and fill with fear.'

The Mask put on a bleak smile then,
And said, 'O vassal-wight,
There once complained a goose-quill pen
To the Scribe of the Infinite
Of the words it had to write
Because they were past its ken.'"

There is a whole philosophy of life in those three strange stanzas, one well known to readers of "The Dynasts," and often touched upon in the other volumes of verse. The suggestion, so painful to our human importance, that mankind is but one of many instruments used by the Invisible Powers to attain purposes which humanity cannot even apprehend—used also with no sort of regard for the instrument itself—is familiar to those who dimly perceive the working of inevitable economic forces in life among which individual man counts for naught. To others it is a very hard saying.

But in "Time's Laughing-Stocks," and here and there in "Moments of Vision," Mr. Hardy dwells on the extraordinary pathos and daring of man—this tiny protagonist of the Universe—who alone amongst all creatures, apparently, criticises and even defies the laws of his being, and the powers whose helpless instrument he seems to be. These powers, expressed for convenience and familiarity in various poems as "God," are represented as perceiving that man is, somehow, better, more alive, than they. In other poems, such as "The Wind Blew Words" in "Moments of Vision," the unity of man with the earth and all its creatures is expressed. A philosophy of life is after all a collection of those conclusions which, among many that fluctuate and contradict one another, seem to work together and prevail.

But philosophy in any shape is not the sole business of poetry, though Mr. Yeats contends with much reason that the poets are the only lasting philosophers and the only pure makers of religion. In "Moments of Vision" Mr. Hardy's fine lyric gift is often shown; there are lovely little songs like "Why be at Pains?" "Lalage's Coming," "Great Things," and others which are just what any man who calls himself a poet *must* be able to write—simple, sensuous and passionate themes, expressed with very high skill. (How many of our so-called "Georgian poets" can do this?)

There are also a great many delicate introspective poems reflecting a mood, a memory, or a reflexion; sometimes ironic and always sad. It is just possible that posterity may say there are a little *too* many of these; they are concerned with strictly individual emotions, and their interest is not very much more general or lasting than an Elizabethan poet's complaints of his mistress's cruelty or coldness.

Yet, taken altogether, what a wonderful poetical treasure Mr. Hardy has given us, and how little appreciated still! We English have certainly the richest and finest poetic literature of all Europe, and the great mass of us know hardly anything about it. Doubtless until the Co-operative Commonwealth arrives we shall continue in our ignorance, which is only lightened by occasional references in the half-penny press and the cinema show. But if our grandchildren are fitly and fully educated they will recognise Mr. Thomas Hardy as one who hands on, enriched and perfected, the great traditions of English poetry in drama, thought and song.

R. T. H.

Daily News. Dec 14. '17

"Moments of Vision." By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 6s. net.

By R. ELLIS ROBERTS.

In Mr. Hardy's poems, especially in this latest book*, we have the people of England speaking, those people on whose alleged silence Mr. Chesterton wrote one of his most successful and least accurate poems. For the people, Hodge and the farmers who employed Hodge, have never been quite silent. They speak through Langland, through Chaucer, through Bunyan, through the old Ballads—and the peasant of the last century speaks through Thomas Hardy. Of course, urban visitors to the country will never admit this. They expect the peasant to be a slow, patient, silent person on things in general.

The fact is that the peasant, like other sane people, regards the war sometimes as the greatest of tragedies, sometimes as the greatest of nuisances; and his permanent view of its value, and its position in the world of reality, has been immortally phrased by Mr. Hardy in a poem which cannot be quoted too often:

Only a man harrowing clods

* * *

In reading the book one feels more and more that what is the matter with most modern art is its overweening egotism: that we do not possess a new Hardy because our young men and women are so terribly preoccupied with themselves—and not with their religious or philosophical or even physical selves—but their emotional selves. Yet Mr. Hardy's intense and loving industry in the study of others renders him, when he wishes to turn his gaze inward, more poignant, more psychologically truthful than any of the artists whose sole and continuous subject is self. Indeed, he sees himself still only in relation to his fellows, and produces what is surely one of the most tragically perfect things which has ever been written on death and the loss felt by the old, "Looking Across":

It is dark in the sky,
And silence is where
We said Good-bye;
And recall do I
That One is out there.

The Dawn is not nigh,
And the trees are bare,
And the waterways sigh
That a year has drawn by,
And Two are out there.

The wind drops to die
Like the phantom of Care
Too frail for a cry,
And it's in my mind's eye
That Three are out there.

This life runs dry
That once ran rare
And rosy in dye,
And fleet the days fly,
And Four are out there.

Tired, tired am I
Of this earthly air,
And my [illegible] sake: Why,
Since these have passed by,
Are not Five out there?

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS

MR. THOMAS HARDY'S latest volume is a *multum in parvo*. It contains a representation of every mood with which he has made us previously familiar, and there is something to remind us of the ruminations scattered through his works on life's little ironies, its regrets, hopes, fears, shadows and dubitations. But its predominant note is valedictory. There are in it pieces collected from every stage of the author's career, some dated as far back as the 'sixties and 'seventies, and the war poems are very recent. But the most touching are those with the date 1913 after them. From such a collection it should be possible to infer what is the peculiar gift and characteristic of Mr. Hardy's poetry. All the great poets—he among them—Homer and Shakespeare, Milton, Shelley, Keats, Burns, divine singers of every tribe and nation, have possessed the stuff of which poetry is made—they have been men who looked before and after—but each has chosen his own method of converting this raw material into literature, the finest of all human achievements. Those we have mentioned have sought assiduously to marry immortal thought to immortal phrase, so that in quoting from them we cannot separate the idea from the words in which it is clothed. As a rule, the poet loves words, and is most fastidious in his choice and arrangement of them. But Mr. Hardy differs from the others in this matter. He is a master of direct expression, and to attain direct expression he employs the handiest words in his vocabulary, to a great extent regardless of whether they are poetic or not. In such a poem as "The Dynasts" this was more conspicuously evident than in these tender retrospections and forebodings. In them Thomas Hardy is once more the prose poet of rustic life. There is no Wessex shepherd into whose inmost soul has penetrated more of the winds and clouds, sunshine, storms and rain of the West Country. That makes the difference which we have tried to establish less prominent in these poems than in some others In *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verse* (Macmillan), the most touching verses are those bracketed together at the end under the title "Finale." They are homely as the dirge in "Cymbeline" and the Lyke-wake Dirge are homely, but they would not be Hardy if they did not possess that original turn which is peculiarly his own—a plant firm rooted in his individuality. No one else has pictured the advance of years in the same way or with a more curious power:

It came to an end;
Yes, the outgazing over the stream,
With the sun on each serpentine bend,
Or, later, the luring moon-gleam;
It came to an end. .....

In the second of these poems, "Afterwards," the diction is very poetic because the theme is also exceptionally poetic. It is the language of one who has been so much with Nature that her moods have become his own. I quote the exquisite first verse and the last two. The sober gravity of the "dumb hour clothed in black" which awaits us all is moderated by a recurrent line which blends matter-of-factness with pathos in a manner that is the poet's own:

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the people say,
"He was a man who used to notice such things"?

. . . . . .

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door,
Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
"He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,
"He hears it not now, but used to notice such things"?

Comparison is unavoidable between this and Tennyson's equally noble swan song:

But such a tide as moving seems asleep
Too full for sound and foam,
When that which drew from out the boundless deep
Turns again home.

Comparison is to the detriment of neither poet, but it helps us to verify the leading character of each. Tennyson was one of the most literary of poets. He knew the best that had been written, not only in our own literature, but in that of several other countries, and it is no secret that "The Golden Treasury" owed its early success to his perfect taste, which was placed at the service of the editor. Tennyson was a literary man with a strong interest in the results of scientific research, but his mind was not really scientific, and the terms of science are used most sparingly by him. They scarcely occur in "In Memoriam," even where he dwells on the new cosmogony which was being derived from the great advance of scientific thought led by Charles Darwin. Tennyson might fairly be described in the language of his own magnificent eulogy of Roman Virgil:

Landscape lover, lord of language
more than he that sang the works and days . . . . . .

Hardy has not worshipped so devoutly at the shrine of the Muses, and if he does not disdain the coin of fancy, he at any rate deals very little with its small change. Probably the most serious study of his life has been scientific, and that invariably colours his attitude. But still to apply his own lovable description, he is our "friend with the musing eye," and that eye wanders over Time and Eternity with a glance now and then at the frailties and illusions of the human insect who, as seen by him, emerges for one brief moment into the sunlight and hums and buzzes with importance as if for his especial benefit the whole machinery of the universe, its wild wheeling planets and starry procession had been created. If his vocabulary in poems like those that have been quoted attains a simple beauty equal to that of some passages in our classic writers, it is not because he aspires to be a "lord of language," but that among the thousand avenues along which his exploring mind has travelled this is the one most fragrant with tender memories and sweet thoughts, most solemn, too, in the darkening recess to which it leads, a recess from which the sun is shielded by the solemn yew and cypress. The language is fine chiefly because the poet is what the Scotch call "wae," a word not translatable by our English "woe." "I was wae to think on't," says Burns, always a master of the vernacular. It is less than "woeful" and more than "pensive" or "elegiac." Such is plainly Mr. Hardy's mood in the lines quoted above, and also in the lovely little poem dated August, 1913, which he calls "Something Tapped." I quote it, and in doing so think again of Tennyson and his "days that are no more," which Edward FitzGerald used to murmur when he, too, was nearing the edge of the Infinite and the past gleamed back to him as only memory of life, memory in which as in a transparent cloud were seen the dear familiar faces of those who had gone before him. But how original is Mr. Hardy's treatment of the old theme:

Something tapped on the pane of my room
When there was never a trace
Of wind or rain, and I saw in the gloom
My weary Beloved's face.

"O I am tired of waiting," she said,
"Night, morn, noon, afternoon;
So cold it is in my lonely bed,
And I thought you would join me soon!"

I rose and neared the window-glass,
But vanished thence had she:
Only a pallid moth, alas,
Tapped at the pane for me.

We shall add only one more quotation, and it is to show Mr. Hardy in his rôle of a writer of the novel of manners. Here is a little painting done exactly from the life:

They came, the brothers, and took two chairs
In their usual quiet way;
And for a time we did not think
They had much to say.

And then they said: "The end has come.
Yes: it has come at last."
And we looked down, and knew that day
A spirit had passed.

In a certain frame of mind one wishes to have a book of Mr. Hardy's poems confined to one class. It would be a volume of good reading not likely ever to lose its savour, but it would not be Hardy. In addition to his purely poetic gifts there is a cynical laughing devil behind his musing eye, one which rejoices in the discovery of human weakness and the folly of human hopes. Who would not like to stop and argue over such a piece as "The Duel" or "The Statue of Liberty" In the former Mr. Hardy gets his cynical effect by letting the lover kill the husband in a duel and ride comfortably away with his false mistress dressed as a page. Shakespeare made Macbeth and Lady Macbeth doubt and reel under the responsibility of killing Duncan, but Mr. Hardy's rival kills his man without as much disturbance as might have been expected from a pork butcher. "All's over, Sweet," he cried; a tragedy with an ending so comic as to be farcical. Still more cynical is "The Statue of Liberty," a tale of a man who enquired of another who was cleaning and garnishing a female Liberty that stood in the town market-place what his object was. The man replied to the effect that his daughter has stood for the figure and she was his "one sweet own," and it was in love of his darling that he was doing this. Whereupon

Answer I gave not. Of that form
The carver was I at his side;
His child, my model, held so saintly,
Grand in feature,
Gross in nature,
In the dens of vice had died.

This is the side of Mr. Hardy that we like least, but it is a part which is necessary to make the whole. P.

MR. HARDY IN WINTER.

"Moments of Vision." By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan. 6s. net.)

In the last poem in his new book, Mr. Hardy meditates on his own immortality, as all men of genius probably do at one time or another. "Afterwards," the poem in which he does so, is interesting, not only for this reason, but because it contains implicitly a definition and a defence of the author's achievement in literature. The poem is too long to quote in full, but the first three verses will be sufficient to illustrate what we have said:

"When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the people say:
'He was a man who used to notice such things'?

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,
The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight
Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, will a gazer think:
'To him this must have been a familiar sight'?

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
Will they say: 'He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,
But he could do little for them; and now he is gone'?"

Even without the two other verses, we have here a remarkable attempt on the part of an artist to paint a portrait, as it were, of his own genius. Mr. Hardy's genius is essentially that of a man who "used to notice such things" as the fluttering of the green leaves in May, and to whom the swift passage of a night-jar in the twilight has "been a familiar sight." He is one of the most sensitive observers of nature who have written English prose. It may even be that he will be remembered longer for his studies of nature than for his studies of human nature. His days are among his greatest characters, as in the wonderful scene on the heath in the opening of "The Return of the Native." He would have written well of the world, one can imagine, even if he had found it uninhabited. But his sensitiveness is not merely sensitiveness of the eye: it is also sensitiveness of the heart. He has, indeed, that hypersensitive sort of temperament, as the verse we have quoted about the hedgehog suggests, which is the victim at once of pity and of a feeling of hopeless helplessness. Never anywhere else has there been such a world of pity put into a quotation as Mr. Hardy has put into that line and a half from "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," which he placed on the title-page of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles":

"Poor wounded name, my bosom as a bed
Would lodge thee!"

In the use to which he put these words Mr. Hardy may be said to have added to the poetry of Shakespeare. He gave them a new imaginative context, and poured his own heart into them. For the same helpless pity which he feels for dumb creatures he feels for men and women:

". . . He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,
But he could do little for them."

It is the spirit of pity brooding over the landscape in Mr. Hardy's books that makes them an original and beautiful contribution to literature, in spite of his endless errors as an artist.

His new book is a reiteration both of his genius and of his errors. As we read the hundred and sixty or so poems it contains we get the impression of genius presiding over a multitude of errors. There are not half-a-dozen poems in the book the discovery of which, should the author's name be forgotten, would send the critics in quest of other work from the same magician's hand. We feel safe in prophesying immortality for only two, "The Oxen" and "In Time of 'the Breaking of Nations'"; and these have already appeared in the selection of the author's poems published in the Golden Treasury Series. The fact that the entirely new poems contain nothing on the plane of immortality, however, does not mean that "Moments of Vision" is a book of verse about which one has the right to be indifferent to the point of leaving it unread. No writer who is so concerned as Mr. Hardy with setting down what his eyes and heart have told him can be regarded with indifference. Mr. Hardy's art is lame, but it carries the burden of genius. He may be a stammerer as a poet, but he stammers in words of his own concerning a vision of his own. When he notes the bird flying past in the dusk, "like an eyelid's soundless blink," he does not achieve music, but he chronicles an experience, not merely echoes one, with such exact truth as to make it immortally a part of all experience. There is nothing borrowed or secondhand, again, in Mr. Hardy's grim vision of the yew-trees in the churchyard by moonlight in "Jubilate":

"The yew-tree arms, glued hard to the stiff, stark air,
Hung still in the village sky as theatre-scenes."

Mr. Hardy may not enable us to hear the music which is more than the music of the earth, but he enables us to see what he saw. He communicates his spectacle of the world. He builds his house lopsided, harsh, and with the windows in unusual places; but it is his own house, the house of a seer, of a personality. That is what we are aware of in such a poem as "On Sturminster Foot Bridge," in which perfect and precise observation of nature is allied to intolerably prosaic utterance. The first verse of this poem runs:

"Reticulations creep upon the slack stream's face
When the wind skims irritably past,
The current clucks smartly into each hollow place
That years of flood have scrabbled in the pier's sodden base;
The floating-lily leaves rot fast."

One could make as good music as that out of a milk-cart. One would accept such musicless verse only from a man of genius. But even here Mr. Hardy takes us home with him and makes us stand by his side and listen to the clucking stream. He takes us home with him again in the poem called "Overlooking the River Stour," which begins:

"The swallows flew in the curves of an eight
Above the river-gleam
In the wet June's last beam:
Like little crossbows animate,
The swallows flew in the curves of an eight
Above the river-gleam.

Planing up shavings made of spray,
A moor-hen darted out
From the bank thereabout,
And though the stream-shine ripped her way;
Planing up shavings made of spray,
A moor-hen darted out."

In this poem we find observation leaping into song in one line and hobbling into a hard-wrought image in another. Both the line in which the first appears, however—

"Like little crossbows animate,"

and the line in which the second happens—

"Planing up shavings made of spray,"

equally make us feel how watchful and earnest an observer is Mr. Hardy. He is a man, we realize, to whom bird and river, heath and stone, road and field and tree, mean immensely more than to his fellows. We do not suggest that he observes nature without bias—that he mirrors the procession of visible things with the delight of a child or a lyric poet. He makes nature his mirror as well as himself a mirror of nature. He colors it with all his sadness, his helplessness, his (if we may invent the word and use it without offence) warpedness. If we are not mistaken, he once compared a bleak morning in "The Woodlanders" to the face of a still-born baby. He loves to dwell on the uncomfortable moods of nature—on such things as:

". . . the watery light
Of the moon in its old age";

concerning which moon he goes on to describe how:

"Green-rheumed clouds were hurrying past where mute and cold it globed
Like a dying dolphin's eye seen through a lapping wave."

This, we fear, is a failure, but it is a failure in a common mood of the author's. It is a mood in which nature looks out at us at times, almost ludicrous in its melancholy. In such a poem as that from which we have just quoted, it is as though we saw nature with a drip on the end of its nose. Mr. Hardy's is something different from a tragic vision. It is a desolate, disheartening, and, in a way, morbid vision. We wander with him too often under—

"Gaunt trees that interlace,
Through whose flayed fingers I see too clearly
The nakedness of the place."

And Mr. Hardy's vision of the life of men and women transgresses similarly into a denial of gladness. His gloom, we feel, goes too far. It goes so far that we are tempted at times to think of it as a factitious gloom. He writes a poem, "Honeymoon Time at an Inn," and this is the characteristic atmosphere in which he introduces us to the bridegroom and bride:

"At the shiver of morning, a little before the false dawn,
The moon was at the window-square,
Deedily brooding in deformed decay—
The curve hewn off her cheek as by an adze;
At the shiver of morning, a little before the false dawn,
So the moon looked in there."

There are no happy lovers or happy marriages in Mr. Hardy's world. Such people as are happy would not be happy if only they knew the truth. Many of Mr. Hardy's poems are dramatic lyrics on the pattern invented by Robert Browning—short stories in verse. But there is a certain air of triumph even in Browning's tragic figures. Mr. Hardy's figures are the inmates of despair. Browning's love-poems belong to heroic literature. Mr. Hardy's love-poems belong to the literature of downheartedness. Browning's men and women are men and women who have had the courage of their love, or who are shown at least against a background of Browning's own courage. Mr. Hardy's men and women do not know the wild faith of love. They have not the courage even of their sins. They are helpless as fishes in a net—a scarcely rebellious population of the ill-matched and the ill-starred.

Many of the poems in the present book fail through a lack of imaginative energy. It is imaginative energy that makes the reading of a great tragedy like "King Lear" not a depressing, but an exalting experience. But is there anything save depression to be got from reading such a poem as "A Caged Goldfinch":—

"Within a churchyard, on a recent grave,
I saw a little cage
That jailed a goldfinch. All was silence, save
Its hops from stage to stage.

There was inquiry in its wistful eye,
And once it tried to sing;
Of him or her who placed it there, and why,
No one knew anything.

True, a woman was found drowned the day ensuing,
And some at times averred
The grave to be her false one's, who when wooing
Gave her the bird."

Apart even from the ludicrous associations which modern slang has given the last phrase, making it look like a queer pun, this poem seems to us to drive sorrow over the edge of the ridiculous. That goldfinch has surely escaped from a Max-Beerbohm parody. The ingenuity with which Mr. Hardy plots tragic situations for his characters in some of his other poems is, indeed, in repeated danger of misleading him into parody. One of his poems tells, for instance, how a stranger finds an old man scrubbing a Statue of Liberty in a city square, and, hearing he does it for love, hails him as "Liberty's knight divine." The old man confesses that he does not care twopence for Liberty, and declares that he keeps the statue clean in memory of his beautiful daughter, who had sat as a model for it—a girl fair in fame as in form. In the interests of his plot and his dismal philosophy, Mr. Hardy identifies the stranger with the sculptor of the statue, and dismisses us with his blighting aside on the old man's credulous love of his dead daughter:

"Answer I gave not. Of that form
The carver was I at his side;
His child my model, held so saintly,
Grand in feature,
Gross in nature,
In the dens of vice had died."

This is worse than optimism.

It is only fair to say that, though poem after poem—including the one about the fat young man whom the doctors gave only six months to live unless he walked a great deal, and who therefore was compelled to refuse a drive in the poet's pheton, though night was closing over the heath—dramatizes the meaningless miseries of life, there is also to be found in some of the poems a faint sunset-glow of hope, almost of faith. There have been compensations, we realize in "I Travel as a Phantom Now," even in this world of skeletons. Mr. Hardy's fatalism concerning God seems not very far from faith in God in that beautiful Christmas poem, "The Oxen." Still, the ultimate mood of the poems is not faith. It is one of pity so despairing as to be almost nihilism. There is mockery in it without the merriment of mockery. The general atmosphere of the poems, it seems to us, is to be found perfectly expressed in the last three lines of one of the poems, which is about a churchyard, a dead woman, a living rival, and the ghost of a soldier:

"There was a cry by the white-flowered mound,
There was a laugh from underground,
There was a deeper gloom around."

How much of the art of Thomas Hardy is suggested in those lines! The laugh from underground, the deeper gloom—are they not all but omnipresent throughout his later and greatest work? The war could not deepen such pessimism. As a matter of fact, Mr. Hardy's war poetry is more cheerful, because more heroic, than his poetry about the normal world. Destiny was already crueller than any war-lord. The Prussian, one fancies, could be no more than a fly—a poisonous fly—on the wheel of destiny's disastrous car.

The Times LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13, 1917.

The poetry of Thomas Hardy, increased now by a new volume,* is singularly continuous in its spirit and character. There are no distinct changes of manner, and no reversal in the general point of view. He has found little to unlearn, but much to explore, assimilate, and utter more completely. So much so that though he has warned us once or twice not to expect unity of thought or colour in his poems, the impression made by reading them all through is likely to be a contrary one. When he returned to poetry in earnest fifteen or twenty years ago he did not seem to be handling a newly-found instrument, or one whose use had been neglected. It was rather as if there had been an accidental break in a real sequence of expression. And apparently this is what actually happened; Mr. Hardy turned aside from poetry to write the Wessex novels. When the tale of the novels was wound up he went back to poetry as naturally as if he had never left it. It was a medium which he could use so sincerely that we can hardly mistake his poems for the mere pastime of an artist. By their quality and bulk they would protest against being so treated. His mind, like Meredith's or Hugo's, has expressed itself instinctively in two versatile forms.

This new book shows him speaking in poetry with the same individual accent, the same directness, and perhaps a certain gain of ease in expression. If it contains nothing so arresting as the greatest pieces in his earlier volumes, it is very even in the level of its achievement. Sometimes this is a euphemism for saying that a book is dull; but this one is never dull, though its tone is quiet. It keeps a good deal to first and last things, life's retrospects and closes; and it approaches them in a mood not so much of critical questioning as of wistful perception. There are no signs in it of a flagging care for art. As a change from thinking on the brevity of the gift of song and many a singer "dead ere his prime," it is good to turn to this veteran writer of genius, who after a long literary career is still perfecting his labours.

Those who go to Hardy's poetry from his novels, as nine-tenths of his readers do, are aware of a resemblance and a contrast. The novels are sometimes called impersonal, and so they are, in the sense that the pulse of human interest is not always the most significant thing in them, and never the only one. There is the whole situation and its setting in inanimate nature, and there is the sweep of destiny in which men's lives are caught. In the poems, on the other hand, page after page is simply and directly human. Among these personal or "impersonative" themes some are tragic and some are trivial, but all are prompted immediately by the experience of living. While many are seen as the crossing of two fates, or merely as matter for reflection, there are cases just as often where the poem seems to spring out of sheer attraction to the individual thing, and we feel the sense of nearness to humankind which some have missed in the novels.

Around these human scenes stretches a wide horizon. Yet the world of the poems is not quite the same as the world of the novels. The novel-world is rich, firm, and intricate; a country that, whether we rest in its imaginations or track the imaged realities, has places we can move in with a certainty of living detail. We can tell the pools where the cattle will be standing, and how the heath's face alters with the changes of the year. But in the world of the poems there is a difference which even familiar names and an occasional minuteness of picture cannot hide. It is as though the colour and substance of the setting had shrunk in a more penetrating light. The close texture of the novels thins to elemental terms of space and time. It is a world both definite and abstract. A mood is fixed precisely "at this point of time, at this point in space," but the converging lines stretch so far away that the chief impression is of vastness. The philosophic view of nature comes out clearly, no longer masked, as in the novels, by the descriptive side. Under a vision of this kind things may take on a spectral aspect—

> And the coomb and the upland
> Foliage-crowned,
> Ancient chalk-pit, milestone, rills in the grass-flat
> Stroked by the light,
> Seemed but a ghost-like gauze, and no substantial
> Meadow or mound.

This permeating vision is suggested in one of the new poems, "The House of Silence." A child and a man are looking at a house with massed trees and a shaded lawn, and the child exclaims how quiet it must be there, for nobody ever seems to move about. Then the answer comes:—

> Ah, that's because you do not bear
> The visioning powers of souls who dare
> To pierce the material screen.
>
> Morning, noon, and night,
> Mid those funereal shades that seem
> The uncanny scenery of a dream,
> Figures dance to a mind with sight,
> And music and laughter like floods of light
> Make all the precincts gleam.
>
> It is a poet's bower,
> Through which there pass, in fleet arrays,
> Long teams of all the years and days,
> Of joys and sorrows, of earth and heaven,
> That meet mankind in his ages seven,
> An aeon in an hour.

But this visionary mood does not work always through abstractions. The seer is also a poet of humanity, to a degree which may surprise those who are accustomed to think of him in the other connexion. It is just this contrast between the universal and the accidental, the permanent and the transitory, which makes the spell of his poetry. We imagined him musing over aeons and dynasties, and we find he is a singer of the smallest human things. No doubt the sense of destiny pervades all his songs, and in a moment we can roll up the curtain which divides the purely human scene from the unseen ways behind it; but still the business of life is given without any of its immediate interest having faded. This interest extends to the most fugitive fancies and the most trifling incidents. Nothing now seems too small for an eye which just before was fastened on big things. And this watchful attention is a guarantee of the personal nature of his poetry. If he appears to note down things simply as they happen and because they happen, this in itself shows how instinctively he finds a voice in poetry. He rejects all idea of it as a sequestered thing, or an exquisite form which can be wooed apart from substance. He will make it when something has struck him and moved him, no matter what is the occasion he responds to. An old sketch, an old psalm-tune, a strange pedestrian on the heath, a halt in a railway waiting room, are among these themes; and "Midnight on the Great Western" is typical of the way he handles them:—

> In the third-class seat sat the journeying boy,
> And the roof-lamp's oily flame
> Played down on his listless form and face,
> Bewrapt past knowing to where he was going,
> Or whence he came.
>
> In the band of his hat the journeying boy
> Had a ticket stuck; and a string
> Around his neck bore the key of his box,
> That twinkled gleams of the lamp's sad beams
> Like a living thing.
>
> What past can be yours, O journeying boy
> Towards a world unknown,
> Who calmly, as if indifferent quite
> To all at stake, can undertake
> This plunge alone?
>
> Knows your soul a sphere, O journeying boy,
> Our rude realms far above,
> Whence with spacious vision you mark and mete
> This region of sin that you find you in,
> But are not of?

The amount of really personal utterance seems larger in "Moments of Vision" than in Hardy's earlier volumes, while the dramatic element is less. But the instinct to dramatise impressions pervades so much of Hardy's work that no estimate, however short, can leave it out. While *The Dynasts*, by its mass and its original quality, reveals this strain most impressively, it recurs so often in his poems that one cannot forget it; indeed, it reminds us involuntarily of a poet who, of all poets, may seem the most unlike Hardy. There is no one who revels more in the dramatic way of handling a theme than Browning. Far removed as he is from Hardy in tone and spirit, he shares with him this dramatizing instinct, nor is it the only one. Both poets are particularly attracted by the meetings and partings of fate, its conjunctions and mistimings. Both, in their unvarnished speech, seem to laugh at the mysteries of poetic diction, though they set their plain language to an elaborate rhyme-structure. Browning's work is immensely the richer, because he has poured into his dramatic poems the almost undivided treasure of his genius—

> Karshish, Cleon, Norbert, and the fifty—

making a gallery that Hardy could have rivalled only if he had chosen to give us

*Moments of Vision, and Miscellaneous Verses. By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan. 6s. net.)

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faith, hope, and love; with Hardy each is given to us for what it is worth, as an experience of which we must make what we can, with no certainty that wrong will be righted.

What, then, is actually the poetic quality of this work—work that is so often dramatic or occasional, and so often uses an abrupt and rather analytic language instead of one that is emotionally suggestive? The first contact with Hardy's poems sometimes produces that baffled, disconcerted feeling which so many have experienced on a first reading of Whitman or Browning. It is not exactly perplexity, for Hardy is never really obscure. It is rather bewilderment at an unusual kind of expression. His language, as critics have pointed out, leans to the logical plainness and hardness of prose, and we look in vain for that rich imagery which, in Keats for instance, leaves behind it a long echo of haunting suggestion. His words, it is said, stand for what they are and for nothing more than they are. There is a truth in this, and it follows that they often convey less than they should; they are adequate enough for clearness, but they are not in tune with the whole meaning, or with the spirit of life which is the true spirit of poetry. As in an earlier volume we were pulled up by the line—though in a context which partly excused it—

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To those "Poems of 1912-13" we go back, perhaps, as the most moving expression which Hardy has given to anything in verse.

The note of the new volume being the experience rather than the criticism of life, it has fewer obviously philosophical poems than the earlier books. Hardy's philosophic poetry is mostly inspired by a critical contemplation of nature. The poem to the Moon is almost an exception among these "Moments of Vision"; there is much less of that austere verse, often ironical in tone, but with deep feeling below it, which depicts Nature sometimes as man's ruthless stepmother, but more often as a fellow-sufferer and fellow-questioner with him under the impulse of unconscious Will. Poetry like this is, of course, an imaginative statement of one way of thinking rather than a system of thought. The philosophic poet is seldom, like Lucretius, a man with a doctrine; but he has his own vision of the world which pierces through the surface. In the widest sense Hardy is never far from this philosophic mood; only the abstract problem gives place more often now to human suggestions.

Could it be otherwise when a huge experience is pressing insistently on us all and driving us for refuge, not to further perplexities, but to the simplest message earth can send? One feels in reading "Moments of Vision" that the space which might have been filled with philosophic verse is now taken naturally by poems of war and patriotism. Hardy has felt, like us all, the impossibility of abstracting himself, and there have evidently been hours when art seemed futile and inhuman. Yet he has gone on, and he has not shut out his art from our common destiny. Of his war-song before dawn, "Men who march away," one felt instinctively that it must survive; and the splendid vigour of phrasing in his sonnet on National Service, now republished here, is not easily forgotten. Those who know *The Dynasts* and his earlier poems on the South African War will not be surprised to find him writing expressively in this strain. Among the one or two war poems in the new book which are tempting to quote we may choose "In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations,'" though it has been printed before; for it puts, in the simplest way, the simplest and most fundamental things:—

> Only a man harrowing clods
> In a slow silent walk
> With an old horse that stumbles and nods
> Half asleep as they stalk.
>
> Only thin smoke without flame
> From the heaps of couch-grass;
> Yet this will go onward the same
> Though Dynasties pass.
>
> Yonder a maid and her wight
> Come whispering by;
> War's annals will cloud into night
> Ere their story die.

THE WAR IN THE NEAR EAST.

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On some of Mr. Ward Price's stories, it appears, the Censor has laid an obliterating hand. But the lifting of one corner of one veil has been allowed, and we

MR. THOMAS HARDY, in his old age, is devoting himself exclusively to that art of poetry with which he dallied throughout his active life as a novelist. His later poems have been enormously finer than his earlier, and there are some of us who incline to think them even more certainly durable than his novels. They have their great limitation, as one will presently suggest, but they are extraordinarily powerful, original in language, rhythm and shape, and amazing as the work of an old man. *Moments of Vision* (Macmillan, 6s. net) contains the latest of them, and there seems every probability of Mr. Hardy adding to them as long as he lives.

* * * * *

Mr. Hardy's poems fall into two broad classes: the narrative and the non-narrative, though poems of the first class frequently contain a reflective element and the others an element of dramatic reminiscence. Almost all his finest poems belong to the second class; and the best of all are those intensely moving lyrics, one group of which appeared in his last book and of which a second series is now printed, written in the last few years under the pressure of a personal grief. The narrative poems are almost always tragic, and they are marred (as some of his prose stories, including *Tess*, are marred) by his determination to lay the gloom on as thick as he can. His *Satires of Circumstance*, in which a number of preposterously grim situations and plots were compressed into a few lines each, invited, and were accorded, the attention of parody, and all his books of verse contain examples in this kind. They often move more to laughter than to tears—so grotesque is the persistent ferocity with which he arranges that his characters shall get it in the neck from fate. There is only one bad example of this in the new book. The story that Mr Hardy's extraordinary brain has constructed concerns a marquis and his wife, who have secured "Royal Sponsors" for their baby:

The morning came. To the park of the peer
The royal couple bore;
And the font was filled with the Jordan water,
And the household awaited their guests before
The carpeted door.

But when they went to the silk-lined cot
The child was found to have died.
"What's now to be done? We can disappoint not
The King and Queen!" the family cried
With eyes spread wide.

Even now they approach the chestnut-drive!
The service must be read.
"Well, since we can't christen the child alive,
By God we shall have to christen him dead!"
The Marquis said.

This these extremely loyal subjects do, and the royal couple depart from "the park of the peer" without knowing what has been done! One need scarcely bother to point out that the hopelessness of the subject has drawn Mr. Hardy into worse writing than he usually perpetrates. The first two lines are thoroughly comic.

* * * * *

The other poems are a different matter. This book is not, as a whole, as good as Mr. Hardy's last; there is nothing in it equal to, for instance, *The Voice of the Past*, one of the most perfect songs a living poet has written. But it is intensely interesting, and often moving. One mood dominates it all: that of regret for the past, for old happiness and old enjoyment, for one figure loved and lost, or for "the bevy now underground." Allowing his irony and his bleak fatalistic philosophy only an occasional peep in, he sits and broods in his old age over things that have gone, and draws music from that sensitive heart of his that no rationalising has ever been able to petrify. Wherever he starts from he reaches the same goal; any small thing is a key which opens the chamber of his sorrows. The log slowly charring in the fire comes from the tree which he climbed and she stood under years ago; the skeleton ribs of a sunshade found under a cliff was left there by a woman now dead. He burns a photograph of someone, not a particular friend, and the eyes of the reproachful dead watch him from the air; a moth beating at his window may be the forlorn spirit of the dead; a pedigree that he is studying springs to life before him, and he meditates over all the departed generations whose blood is in his veins; he starts out on a familiar road to pay calls and regards with resignation and melancholy the changes of his own flesh just as he watches the decay of an old ruined house where the fiddles once played and rustic feet twined in the forgotten country dances. Time after time he writes what is virtually the same poem, but the constant freshness and poignancy of his feeling makes it always new. *The Anniversary* is characteristic:

It was at the very date to which we have come,
In the month of the matching name,
When, at a certain minute, the sun had upwum,
Its couch-time at night being the same.
And the same path stretched here that people now follow,
And the same stile crossed their way,
And beyond the same green hillock and hollow
The same horizon lay;
And the same man passes now hereby who passed thereby
that day.

Let so much be said of the date-day's sameness:
But the tree that neighbours the track,
And stoops like a pedlar afflicted with lameness,
Had no waterlogged wound or wind-crack.
And the stones of that wall were not enshrouded
With mosses of many tones,
And the garth up afar was not overcrowded
With a multitude of white stones,
And the man's eyes then were not so sunk that you saw
the socket-bones.

It will be observed that there are several awkwardnesses of phraseology here. Mr. Hardy bristles with them. In a spring poem he even says, "The primrose pants in its heedless push," and in a search for a rhyme he will embellish a modern and simple lyric with "a maid and her wight." But the odd thing is that we will accept from him words and phrases that would seriously damage anyone else, and that sounds which from any one else would be sheer cacophonies are, in Mr. Hardy, as it were, overborne and absorbed by the compelling music of his emotion. It may be monotonous, but it is scarcely ever anything but genuine and strong.

* * * * *

His monotony is his weakness. He can soften one's bones with his lamentations, wring one's heart with his regrets. He can vary his interest a great deal by the accuracy with which he describes the landscapes and people that pass through his mournful chants. But a major poet has more moods than one. It is characteristic of Mr. Hardy that only the landscapes of his past are ever sunny; when he is writing in the present tense the chances are a hundred to one that it will be raining hard, on window-pane and bereaved tree, and there is quite a strong probability that he will actually find himself in a churchyard where the natural inclemency of the weather is reinforced by the rain-worn cherubs on the tomb-stones, the half-effaced names, the dripping moss and the direct reminders of the dead. It is a welcome change when he makes the admission that even a life like this is worth having, as in this:

I travel as a phantom now,
For people do not wish to see
In flesh and blood so bare a bough
As Nature makes of me

And thus I visit bodiless
Strange gloomy households often at odds
And wonder if Man's consciousness
Was a mistake of God's.

And next I meet you, and I pause,
And think that if mistake it were,
As some have said, O then it was
One that I well can bear!

And twice he goes so far as to hanker after a belief that is not his and of which he perceives the inaccessible loveliness and sweetness. On a Christmas Eve, at midnight, someone mentions the legend about the oxen kneeling in the stall, and he feels:

If some one said on Christmas Eve,
"Come; see the oxen kneel
In the lonely barton by yonder coomb,
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

But these are exceptions, and Mr. Hardy, as a poet, must be described as one who had he been less strong, could not have escaped the appellation of "morbid."

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Henchard, Jude, Tess and the others in a poetic form. In reading Hardy's dramatic lyrics and romances one cannot help being reminded that he is also a novelist; these poems constantly have the interest of first notes or impressions which might afterwards be used otherwise. But the main difference between the two poets is, of course, the obvious one which cuts any comparison short; it is the contrast between Browning's enthusiasm and Hardy's waiting attitude. With Browning every situation is made to justify faith, hope, and love; with Hardy each is given to us for what it is worth, as an experience of which we must make what we can, with no certainty that wrong will be righted.

What, then, is actually the poetic quality of this work—work that is so often dramatic or occasional, and so often uses an abrupt and rather analytic language instead of one that is emotionally suggestive? The first contact with Hardy's poems sometimes produces that baffled, disconcerted feeling which so many have experienced on a first reading of Whitman or Browning. It is not exactly perplexity, for Hardy is never really obscure. It is rather bewilderment at an unusual kind of expression. His language, as critics have pointed out, leans to the logical plainness and hardness of prose, and we look in vain for that rich imagery which, in Keats for instance, leaves behind it a long echo of haunting suggestion. His words, it is said, stand for what they are and for nothing more than they are. There is a truth in this, and it follows that they often convey less than they should; they are adequate enough for clearness, but they are not in tune with the whole meaning, or with the spirit of life which is the true spirit of poetry. As in an earlier volume we were pulled up by the line—though in a context which partly excused it—

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and the last line seems a sudden drop into the flat *clichés* of prose. Sometimes this lapse to the prosaic level pervades an entire poem or poems, as in the "Satires of Circumstance"—not the whole volume so called, which includes some of Hardy's greatest things, but the series which gives its title to the book. It is not the grimness of subject in these poems, but a certain obviousness in their treatment, which makes us feel that they have fallen from the generous breadth of poetry.

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> dull subterrene reverberations
> Shake him when storms make mountains of their plains.

or the poignant rhythmical contrast at the end of "The Voice"—

> Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness
> Travelling across the wet mead to me here,
> You being ever consigned to existlessness,
> Heard no more again far or near?
>
> Thus I; faltering forward,
> Leaves around me falling,
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The Saturday Review | "Tippiwit! Swe-e-et! Ki-ki-ki! Come hither, come hither, come hither!"

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By J. C. Squire

Thomas Hardy's Verse

MR. THOMAS HARDY, in his old age, is devoting himself exclusively to that art of poetry with which he dallied throughout his active life as a novelist. His later poems have been enormously finer than his earlier, and there are some of us who incline to think them even more certainly durable than his novels. They have their great limitation, as one will presently suggest, but they are extraordinarily powerful, original in language, rhythm and shape, and amazing as the work of an old man. *Moments of Vision* (Macmillan, 6s. net) contains the latest of them, and there seems every probability of Mr. Hardy adding to them as long as he lives.

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Mr. Hardy's poems fall into two broad classes: the narrative and the non-narrative, though poems of the first class frequently contain a reflective element and the others an element of dramatic reminiscence. Almost all his finest poems belong to the second class; and the best of all are those intensely moving lyrics, one group of which appeared in his last book and of which a second series is now printed, written in the last few years under the pressure of a personal grief. The narrative poems are almost always tragic, and they are marred (as some of his prose stories, including *Tess*, are marred) by his determination to lay the gloom on as thick as he can. His *Satires of Circumstance*, in which a number of preposterously grim situations and plots were compressed into a few lines each, invited, and were accorded, the attention of parody, and all his books of verse contain examples in this kind. They often move more to laughter than to tears—so grotesque is the persistent ferocity with which he arranges that his characters shall get it in the neck from fate. There is only one bad example of this in the new book. The story that Mr Hardy's extraordinary brain has constructed concerns a marquis and his wife, who have secured "Royal Sponsors" for their baby:

The morning came. To the park of the peer
The royal couple bore;
And the font was filled with the Jordan water,
And the household awaited their guests before
The carpeted door.

But when they went to the silk-lined cot
The child was found to have died.
"What's now to be done? We can disappoint not
The King and Queen!" the family cried
With eyes spread wide.

Even now they approach the chestnut-drive!
The service must be read.
"Well, since we can't christen the child alive,
By God we shall have to christen him dead!"
The Marquis said.

This these extremely loyal subjects do, and the royal couple depart from "the park of the peer" without knowing what has been done! One need scarcely bother to point out that the hopelessness of the subject has drawn Mr. Hardy into worse writing than he usually perpetrates. The first two lines are thoroughly comic. [as intended to be]

* * * * *

The other poems are a different matter. This book is not, as a whole, as good as Mr. Hardy's last; there is nothing in it equal to, for instance, *The Voice of the Past*, one of the most perfect songs a living poet has written. But it is intensely interesting, and often moving. One mood dominates it all: that of regret for the past, for old happiness and old enjoyment, for one figure loved and lost, or for "the bevy now underground." Allowing his irony and his bleak fatalistic philosophy only an occasional peep in, he sits and broods in his old age over things that have gone, and draws music from that sensitive heart of his that no rationalising has ever been able to petrify. Wherever he starts from he reaches the same goal; any small thing is a key which opens the chamber of his sorrows. The log slowly charring in the fire comes from the tree which he climbed and she stood under years ago; the skeleton ribs of a sunshade found under a cliff was left there by a woman now dead. He burns a photograph of someone, not a particular friend, and the eyes of the reproachful dead watch him from the air; a moth beating at his window may be the forlorn spirit of the dead; a pedigree that he is studying springs to life before him, and he meditates over all the departed generations whose blood is in his veins; he starts out on a familiar road to pay calls and remembers that all those he used to call on are gone. Everything is behind him and nothing before him; he watches with resignation and melancholy the changes of his own flesh just as he watches the decay of an old ruined house where the fiddles once played and rustic feet twined in the forgotten country dances. Time after time he writes what is virtually the same poem, but the constant freshness and poignancy of his feeling makes it always new. *The Anniversary* is characteristic:

It was at the very date to which we have come,
In the month of the matching name,
When, at a like minute, the sun had upwarn,
Its couch-time at night being the same.
And the same path stretched here that people now follow,
And the same stile crossed their way,
And beyond the same green hillock and hollow
The same horizon lay;
And the same man passes now hereby who passed hereby that day.

Let so much be said of the date-day's sameness;
But the tree that neighbours the track,
And stoops like a pedlar afflicted with lameness,
Had no waterlogged wound or wind-crack.
And the stones of that wall were not enshrouded
With mosses of many tones,
And the garth up afar was not overcrowded
With a multitude of white stones,
And the man's eyes then were not so sunk that you saw the socket-bones.

It will be observed that there are several awkwardnesses of phraseology here. Mr. Hardy bristles with them. In a spring poem he even says, "The primrose pants in its heedless push," and in a search for a rhyme he will embellish a modern and simple lyric with "a maid and her wight." But the odd thing is that we will accept from him words and phrases that would seriously damage anyone else, and that sounds which from any one else would be sheer cacophonies are, in Mr. Hardy, as it were, overborne and absorbed by the compelling music of his emotion. It may be monotonous, but it is scarcely ever anything but genuine and strong.

* * * * *

His monotony is his weakness. He can soften one's bones with his lamentations, wring one's heart with his regrets. He can vary his interest a great deal by the accuracy with which he describes the landscapes and people that pass through his mournful chants. But a major poet has more moods than one. It is characteristic of Mr. Hardy that only the landscapes of his past are ever sunny; when he is writing in the present tense the chances are a hundred to one that it will be raining hard, on window-pane and bereaved tree, and there is quite a strong probability that he will actually find himself in a churchyard where the natural inclemency of the weather is reinforced by the rain-worn cherubs on the tombstones, the half-effaced names, the dripping moss and the direct reminders of the dead. It is a welcome change when he makes the admission that even a life like this is worth having, as in this:

I travel as a phantom now,
For people do not wish to see
In flesh and blood so bare a bough
As Nature makes of me

And thus I visit bodiless
Strange gloomy households often at odds
And wonder if Man's consciousness
Was a mistake of God's.

And next I meet you, and I pause,
And think that if mistake it were,
As some have said, O then it was
One that I well can bear!

And twice he goes so far as to hanker after a belief that is not his and of which he perceives the inaccessible loveliness and sweetness. On a Christmas Eve, at midnight, someone mentions the legend about the oxen kneeling in the stall, and he feels:

If some one said on Christmas Eve,
"Come: see the oxen kneel
In the lonely barton by yonder coomb,
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

But these are exceptions, and Mr. Hardy, as a poet, must be described as one who had he been less strong, could not have escaped the appellation of "morbid."

cutting from The Bookman of

April 1918

HARDY'S POEMS.

By Francis Bickley.

WHEN the future historian of poetry comes to deal with Thomas Hardy, it is probable that the Spirits Ironic will gather round to smile at his perplexity, for his task will not be easy. The historian, if he is to produce a book and not a compilation, must get his figures into some sort of pattern; and though the author of "Tess" and the author of "The Dynasts" will have their places of right among the prominent themes, the place of the author of "Wessex Poems" will be troublesome to assign. Certainly he cannot be relegated to the minor herd: there is something large about even his trivial pieces which precludes that solution, even though it would give him for company not a few who are not only his superiors in craftsmanship but are also gifted in fuller measure with the essence, the magic stuff, of poetry. Nor is he one of the great figures who must stand alone or only in the company of the great. If he must stand alone, it is because there is no one who can quite be matched with him.

In short, Hardy, the poet, is one of the eccentrics of literature, one of those who are "not of the centre," as Arnold used to say. The reason for this is not to be found in his philosophy, which is in itself as suitable an ingredient of poetry as that of Meredith or Browning and would seem to be more in accord with reality. Nor is it to be found in the fact that his poetry is so often local in colouring, or that his characters are rarely universal types but nearly always to be visualised quite distinctly in the quaint *démodé* costume and *coiffeur*—not quite old-fashioned enough to have become definitely romantic—of the 'sixties or 'seventies. He is not a local poet or (like Austin Dobson) a "costume" poet: his subjects may be localised and dated, but the atmosphere of irony through which they are seen neutralises the limitation. Nevertheless, in the company of the poets he is manifestly a provincial; his manners are not those of the *beau monde* of poetry. Character earns him his right to a place in that company, but both temperament and manners keep him aloof. He lacks not only its fervour but also its tact; falling short of Pope as well as of Shakespeare.

We might perhaps figure poetry as a wheel, which, according as this or that man spins it, appears a steady or a fitful flame or a polished, gleaming disc of metal. As Hardy spins it, it is still a wheel. He lets you see the spokes, which, though they are undeniably of good metal, are not fused into unity.

He does not spin the wheel quite fast enough, nor does he spin it quite steadily—which is the same as to say that he lacks the true poetic tact. His sense of fitness is imperfect. There is little to be said for the old prejudice against the use in poetry of words of Latin origin. All the resources of a language should be at the disposal of those who at once put it to its finest uses and enrich it. But Hardy's subjects nearly always seem to call for the atmosphere to be best obtained by a vernacular treatment, and his use of latinisms is notorious. A defect in his prose, still more is this a defect in his verse; or rather the defect is more obvious there because the work is on a smaller scale. Again, he is a curious and skilful metrist; but he too often plays the virtuoso when the simple balladist's were a more appropriate rôle. Then he sometimes overdoes the grotesque, both in diction and in subject, and is not infrequently betrayed by his humour into the ludicrous. Death is his favourite theme, and he has often treated it worthily, but there is more than one piece in his latest volume which calls to mind

the famous tragedy of the ten little nigger boys. On the other hand he is at his best as an elegist and has written nothing finer than the threnody for Swinburne, "A Singer Asleep," daringly reminiscent of Swinburne's own great threnody for Baudelaire, or than the Waterloo lyric, very characteristically an anticipatory dirge, in "The Dynasts."

While poetry is always immanent in the Wessex novels, the Wessex poems are the verses of a novelist. Personal as they are, they are mostly dramatic and objective. Their subjects are not so much projections of the author's personality as surrounded with it. They are novels in miniature, notes which have been refined and pared down to essentials instead of having been expanded and elaborated. Many of them might have been written in prose; to put them into verse was the technical dandyism of the miniaturist or the carver of ivory. Perhaps the historian will be well advised to treat them with the novels, as chips from the diamonds which are "Tess" and "The Woodlanders."

"Moments of Vision"* is Hardy's fifth volume of poetry, exclusive of "The Dynasts." Its faults and merits are those of its predecessors. Its special characteristic is that it contains its author's war poems, except the famous "Men Who March Away," which is in an earlier book. Some of these illustrate the failings with which this paper has been perhaps too exclusively concerned, but "In Time of 'the Breaking of Nations'" is not eccentric at all but obvious as most great poetry is obvious:

"Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

"Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

"Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by:
War's annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die."

To have written that and "The Darkling Thrush" and "A Singer Asleep" and "The Eve of Waterloo" and "Men Who March Away" is to have established an unassailable claim to the high name of poet.

BEES IN AMBER

The Saturday Review
Dec. 22. 1917

"NO MORE; TOO LATE; FAREWELL."

Moments of Vision, and Miscellaneous Verses. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 6s. net.

MR. HARDY is one of our few really great men of letters living to-day, a master whose achievements alone ought to teach the twentieth century that derision of the Victorians is a mark of the shallow-minded. His work in prose is done, and he has returned in his later years to the poetry which was his first love in letters. Vivid and arresting as this verse is, and marked with the personality of an original craftsman, we do not rank it with the novels, as some good judges do. Mr. Hardy's Muse is severely shrouded in gloom, limited by the exposition of his despairing philosophy. Only in rare instances does he admit into these 'Moments of Vision' the gleams of romance which irradiate the tragedy of the novels. "We hate poetry," said Keats, "that has a palpable design upon us." We would not say as much as that in an age when the world needs teachers, not least among its masters of style and emotion; but we cannot help feeling that a perpetual sense of defeat, culpable negligence not to be retrieved, fatal delay, and worthless success in our poor human affairs, would handicap the best of poets. Shakespeare had his period of despairing gloom, but he came out into the clear, bright air of the 'Tempest.' Mr. Hardy chooses to record the saddest moments of remorse and defeat. He does not record the something lasting yet which makes the "quickened heart leap in its place," the "afterglow thrown back from long set days," which came even to him who wrote:

"Look in my face; my name is Might-have-been;
I am also called No-more, Too-late, Farewell."

So he seems chiefly concerned to show us that this is the worst of all possible worlds. The idea of the peace that passeth all understanding may be difficult or impossible to many, but that of a malignant Power who smiles over universal and inevitable disaster is more unthinkable. Even the stern nescience of Lucretius was brightened with touches of joy in upspringing life. We do not, of course, wish to be bathed in sentimental optimism, or to forego the mood of tragedy. But tragedy which gives us less a sense of pity and terror to purge our souls than one of sheer hopelessness has missed its mark. Pathos Mr. Hardy can command, and an infinite sense of poignancy. He has, too, as we have long known, a strange insight into the ways of men and women, but with a reserve, we think, of private judgment which is too hard upon them, especially upon women. They are of the earth, which with its stones and trees, and the smallest of its living things Mr. Hardy has gathered wonderfully into his drama of existence. Sights and sounds delicately observed and vividly rendered all play their part in that drama. Here Mr. Hardy is a pioneer, as in bringing the intractable world of science with its atoms and technical terms into his verse.

Much of the present volume, however, belongs to earlier years and a more normal poetic vocabulary. Yet it is in technique that Mr. Hardy sometimes brings his readers up short. His rhythm tends to be abrupt and strange; he packs his verse close with poignant words, and we feel that they have made a successful struggle to get themselves in. He works out his discords to a tune, as do some modern musicians, and leaves us wondering if all of them were needed. Then again he sinks, perhaps "half in anger, half in scorn," to common language, which is not poetry, as in the lines:—

"And zest is swayed,
And trust is doubt,
And slow effacement
Proceeds throughout."

Or,

"There was one meekly blooming
In close propinquity."

The most striking of the poems are the visions of ghostly presences, in particular the 'Glimpse' of the 'Maid with Red Hair.' Old days in church and the living power of heredity in a world where all else is fleeting are effectively touched. But we like best that assertion of endless romance even 'In Time of the Breaking of Nations' which appeared in our own columns:—

"Yonder a maid and her wight
Came whispering by;
War's annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die."

Here is a simplicity of rhythm and language unusual in a curious and interesting innovator in poetic style. Looking once more over the pages, we cling, too, to 'The Blinded Bird' which sang so zestfully in spite of wrongs. It took us back by a happy memory to that musical and liquid voice under Mr. Hardy's own Greenwood Tree which carolled to the world of youth and spring:—

"Tippiwit! Swe-e-et! Ki-ki-ki! Come hither, come hither, come hither!"

There are gleams to be followed as well as glooms to be endured, and in one poem at least Mr. Hardy ranges himself with Browning: When the "Instans Tyrannus" was finishing the man he hated,

"Do you see? Just my vengeance complete,
The man sprang to his feet,
Stood erect, caught at God's skirts, and prayed!
So, *I* was afraid!"

So in Mr. Hardy's 'Something that Saved Him,' when things seemed desperate and there was no way out,

"The clock rang;
The hour brought a hand to deliver;
I upsprang,
And looked back at den, ditch and river,
And sang."

Birmingham Post
Dec. 14. 1917

MOMENTS OF VISION.

MR. HARDY'S NEW BOOK.

The two prevailing elements in Mr. Hardy's verse are, without doubt, sadness and simplicity, strangely mingled with morbid fancy and a few daring flights of imagination. He can write pure music, as in the beautiful "Molly Gone":—"No more summer for Molly and me," or seem nearly uncouth, as in "Sturminster Footbridge":—

Reticulations creep upon the slack stream's face
When the wind skims irritably past,
The current clacks smartly into each hollow place
That years of flood have scrabbled in the pier's sodden base;
The floating lily leaves rot fast.

In this new volume, "Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses" (Macmillan, 6s. net), there are many memories of the "old psalm tune," the village pew, a country fair, and a quiet youth summed up in the simple catalogue of "Great Things":—

Will these be always great things,
Great things to me?
Let it befall that one will call,
"Soul, I have need of thee."
What then? Joy-jaunts, impassioned flings,
Love, and its ecstasy,
Will always have been great things,
Great things to me.

It would be difficult, indeed, to find a tenderer and more sympathic apostrophe to nature than "A Backward Spring":—

The trees are afraid to put forth buds,
And there is timidity in the grass.

While the imagination could scarcely excel the grave picture of the "meek, mild" oxen, "all on their knees," on "Christmas Eve, at twelve of the clock."

But on the other hand Mr. Hardy is bitter and somewhat morbid in the verses upon the skeleton sunshade, "and the woman who carried that sunshade," a skeleton too, the remarried widow, and above all "The Duel," whose cynical brevity and directness recall some of our finest ballad-poetry. For him, too, a "January Night" is overshadowed by—

The man at the house below
Whose coffin they took in to-day?

and even his Robin can only console itself for the "unhappiness" of winter by remembering that "when it lasts"—

I get to feel
No grief at all,
For I turn to a cold stiff
Feathery ball.

For daring imagination, however, Mr. Hardy reaches his supreme height in the fine "Fragment" concerning "the bodies of men from far and wide who, motionless, were nevertheless not dead." They are "waiting for one called God," in order that (from their telling, we suppose) He may "know how things have been going on earth and below it; it is clear He must know some day." The "motionless" men have a strange fancy that they "have reached feeling faster" than God, though—no doubt, "He will overtake us anon, if the world goes on." The precise significance of the enigma is left in mystery, and on that note we may leave the poet, with most sincere gratitude for a volume destined to make us feel and think deeply over messages to mankind conveyed in musical, vigorous, and brave words.

Manchester Guardian, March 1, 1918

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS

Moments of Vision, and Miscellaneous Verses. By Thomas Hardy. [illegible] millan and Co. Pp. xi. 356. 6s. net.

Nobly at the head of English [illegible] Mr. Hardy may be sure of admiration for any work that comes from his [illegible] book compels a much more vital [illegible] the respect that would in any case [illegible] the utterance of a poet who had come [illegible] man of age through so much splendid [illegible] ment. For here is a considerable [illegible] poetry, most of it presumably of quite [illegible] date, that has no sign of crystallising [illegible] most robust creative vigour. We have [illegible] not the book the experimental touch, not [illegible] the young artist who is not yet sure of his [illegible] manner, but of the artist who in his [illegible] is master of his technical powers and is [illegible] elastic and adventurous in his appreciation [illegible] life. The energy of these poems is that [illegible] imagination in its prime. Where [illegible] will place Mr. Hardy among the [illegible] poets in posterity's holiness, but [illegible] will fail to discern in his poetry [illegible] individuality as emphatic and [illegible] any in our literature there is not [illegible] smallest chance. And from these new poems that individuality emerges, with its rather charming because perfectly frank limitations, its almost unrivalled penetrative power, and its superb self-realisation, as clearly as from any of the earlier work; indeed, it is perhaps not too much to say that never has this poet's faculty been so impressive as it is here.

Perhaps the thing that most immediately strikes the reader of Mr. Hardy's poetry is his astonishing power of finding expression for the most abstruse and elusive mental processes. This is not to say that it is his finest quality, but to point to it as the characteristic likely first to catch the reader's attention. To read such poems as "The Pedestrian," "The Masked Face," and above all, perhaps, "Afterwards," is to be amazed at the sheer will-power of genius that can so bend and shape this most stubborn intellectual matter as swiftly and easily as though it were the merest sapling-wood of fancy. To call Mr. Hardy the most intellectual of poets would be to misprize many whose brainwork is as severe as his if less apparent, but we know of no other poetry in which the mark of intellectual mastery over difficult material has so fine and direct a value for its own sake. It is a quality that continually redeems content-matter from its own inherent disability. Poems like "The Statue of Liberty" and "The Photograph" yield to analysis a sentiment that is scarcely more than melodramatic, and yet they achieve the strictest artistic probity through sheer passionate application. The readiness with which this poet can find interest in anything that presents itself to his mind occasionally deceives him into recording matter that is, so to speak, a little below proof, as in "Row'tor Town" and "The Pink Frock." Moreover, the very imperiousness of his mind now and again conceives a form so elaborate that it becomes insecure—the stanzas of "To My Father's Violin" and "The Pedigree" hardly carry their own weight,—and, finally, a phrase is sometimes allowed to pass with a touch in it of disdain for approving, as though the poet should say, "You know well enough I could do other than this if I thought it necessary." But these are blemishes of no account beside the splendid force and richness that spring from the quality of which these are but momentary defects. Over and over again in this volume Mr. Hardy gives us poems of complete and subtle achievement. The pure, idyllic beauty of "The Oxen," the psychological [illegible] of "Heredity" and "You Were the Sort that Men Forget" and "An Upbraiding," the fine, ironic gaiety of "The Dolls," the perfect realisation of significant movements such as we find in "The Ballet," and the poignant dignity of "I looked up from my writing"—these are things that need no praise. To be aware of them is to know that they can not pass away, and to rejoice that at nearly eighty years of age Mr. Hardy has added vitally to a body of work that will assuredly place him among the immortals, a place which we believe his poetry to [illegible] flower.

Manchester Wkly Morning Post
Times: Jan 26: 1918 Dec 8. 1917

REVIEWS by C. FOX SMITH.

MR. THOMAS HARDY'S POEMS.

"Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan.) 6s. net.

Mr. Hardy's new volume of poems is remarkably representative, including as it does some written so long since as the 'sixties or 'seventies, and others written since the beginning of the present war; the latter not all included in the comparatively small section, "Poems of War and Patriotism," which brings the book to a close. The last-named section contains one notably fine piece, "In Time of the Breaking of Nations";—

Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk. . . . .

Otherwise, the war poems are the least interesting in the collection.

In the main the poems are thorough Hardy—the curious mingling of awkwardness and occasional (no doubt intentional) cacophony, with a lyrical gift which insists on being heard in such pieces as "Timing Her," "The Wind's Prophecy," and "Great Things":—

Sweet cyder is a great thing,
A great thing to me,
Spinning down to Weymouth town
By Ridgway thirstily,
And maid and mistress summoning
Who tend the hostelry:
O cyder is a great thing,
A great thing to me!

Then there are poems in the vein of "Under the Greenwood Tree," such as "The Choirmaster's Burial," which tells what—

. . . the treble man told
When he had grown old;

how about the old choirmaster's grave,

Thronged roundabout,
Where the frost was graying
The headstoned grass,
A band all in white
Like the saints in church-glass,
Singing and playing
The ancient stave
By the choirmaster's grave.

In many of the poems the theme is very similar, sometimes expressed in "macabre" and gloomy fashion; otherwise in a mood of more tender, or else in mildly ironical, reflection. The first-named vein is seen in "A Merry-making":—

I will get a new string for my fiddle,
And call to the neighbours to come,
And partners shall dance down the middle
Until the old pewter-wares hum:
And we'll sip the mead, cyder, and rum!

From the night came the oddest of answers:
A hollow wind, like a bassoon,
And headstones all ranged up as dancers,
And cypresses droning a croon,
And gurgoyles that mouthed to the tune.

The second in "Paying Calls," and in "The Man Who Forgot"—both too long for quoting. As in his prose, Mr. Hardy never fails to seize on the dramatic qualities of landscape and of nature's moods, a striking example of which is found in "Near Lanivet, 1872." The poems abound, too, in such descriptive phrases—pictures in a few words—as:—

"Swart bats, whose wings, be-webbed and tanned,
Whirred like the fly of ancient clocks";

or—

"The rain came down like silken strings";

or—

"The headland, vulturine,
Snores like a giant in his sleep."

Indeed, the poem from which the last quotation is taken is full of such phrases. And throughout there is the novelist's faculty at work in the medium of verse—the faculty which is unable to confine itself within the lyrical moment, but continually ranges into the past and future, suggesting a story even in the briefest poem. The other poet in which this faculty is seen most strongly is Browning, who never wrote a line of prose except a few letters. The wonder is that Browning never handled prose as an artistic

THE TWILIGHT MOOD.

MOMENTS OF VISION. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan and Co. 6s. net.

George Meredith, in a conversation reported in Lord Morley's book of reminiscences, talked of Mr. Hardy's "twilight mood," and the phrase describes the sad chronicler of the muted life of Wessex aptly enough, if it falls short of defining him. The description becomes a definition if we add that the twilight is that which precedes the coming of a timeless night—not that which heralds the dawning of a new day. There is something salutary, nevertheless, in his pessimism; it is a purge, at any rate, for whatsoever of the soft, soothing illusions of the Victorian age has survived into this great period of stern realities. And if those who are young enough to be joyous even to-day insist that he is merely the weary victim of *accidie* or the sense of a cosmical grievance, let them at the same time confess that the sincerity of his joyless and perplexed poems is manifest in every stanza, and that sincerity in poetry, even if mistaken, is a wholesome thing. Mr. John Drinkwater in "The Loom of the Poets," which is dedicated to this one of the two elect patrons of the young Georgian poets (the other is the Poet Laureate), speaks in praise of the haters of gilded sophistries, and goes on to say:

And such are you, O singer of the gloom,
Where-through in travail you have slowly won;
Albeit your song is heavy with the doom
Of men whose little strivings are foredone,
Yet it is woven on the living loom
Of your own suffering beneath the sun.

Naturally and necessarily we first turn to the war-poems at the end of the present volume in the hope, not of solace or consolation, but of finding something, however vexed and obscure, of the significance of war; an august process whereby Nature, careful of the type and careless of the individual, decides which civilisation is to find fresh scope for growth and a new blossoming to fruition. But, alas! we get nothing but querulous plaints vaguely touched with the sickly 'ics and 'isms which had all but rendered this old nation incapable of opposing a predatory Power to any purpose. In the first of his "Poems of War and Patriotism" he proves himself a cosmopolite—he that was once the most English of Englishmen!:

I journeyed from my native spot
Across the south sea shire,
And found that people in hall and cot
Laboured and suffered each his lot
Even as I did mine.

Thus noting them in meads and marts
It did not seem to me
That my dear country with its hearts,
Minds, yearnings, worse and better parts,
Had ended with the sea.

Or, waxing bolder in pressing home this deadly delusion, he actually insists that the people of Germany and the people of his own Wessex are kinsmen with a kindred tongue:

I walked in loamy Wessex lanes, afar
From rail-track and from highway, and I heard
In field and farmstead many an ancient word
Of local lineage like "Thu bist," "Er war,"

"Ich woll," "Er sholl," and by-talk similar,
Even as they speak who in this month's moon gird
At England's very loins, thereunto spurred
By gangs whose glory threats and slaughters are.

But this is to forget all that can be called historical truth. For were not the people of Wessex a gentle and civilised race, Christian, and chivalrous, hundreds of years before the Prussian barbarism was thinly veneered with a mock Christianity? Which, then, is the type best fitted to govern the world for the service of mankind and to the greater glory of God (at any rate, Mr. Hardy has faith in goodness, if he will not personify it)—Alfred or Arminius, who is what he was in Cæsar's day? Let us pause and read one of Wordsworth's Sonnets in honour of England to take the taste of this mawkish well-meaning folly off our lips, and then turn back to his other poems of the living and loving which is being kept inviolate by men who fight on land and by sea and in the air. Much of what he writes is imperceptibly poetry; nay, in defiance of some of the *vers-libristes* in the Georgian sodality, we dare to say it is nothing more than faintly-figured prose with rhymes dropped in. It is the poet with the pedestrian mind at work again; and the moments of vision are rather less frequent for him than they were for that older incumbent of a green, quiet country-side who could begin a sonnet with the line:

Jones! while from Calais, southward you and I—

and vision for the former all his life has never been the eternal moment of exultation and agony which occasionally transfigures the whole being of Wordsworth (as though an Archdeacon should suddenly become a thunder-winged, lightning-eyed seraph, afterwards dwindling into a Rural Dean), but merely the slight quickening of a commonplace mood by the wayward spirit within called "Temperament." Mr. Hardy's verse is temperamental; nay, it is *temperamentfull*. And yet, more often than not, the spirit within is so weak, so easily thrust back, that the piece is little more than anecdote. A rare anecdote, sometimes, as in the following:

Something tapped on the pane of my room,
When there was never a trace
Of wind or rain, and I saw in the gloom
My weary Beloved's face.

"O I am tired of waiting," she said,
"Night, morn, noon, afternoon;
So cold it is in my lonely bed,
And I thought you would join me soon!"

I rose and neared the window-glass,
But vanished thence had she:
Only a pallid moth, alas,
Trapped at the pane for me.

And when there is no question of anecdotage and he sings in the after-glow of not unhappy yesterdays, the temperamental point is made by a slight change of a chosen word as in the third stanza of "Great Things":

Love is, yea, a great thing,
A great thing to me,
When, having drawn across the lawn
In darkness silently,
A figure flits like one a-wing
Out from the nearest tree:
O love is, yea, a great thing,
A great thing to me!

Most precious perhaps to the lover of his novels, in which the spirit within moves more freely and frankly, flitting without at times and clapping its silvery wings, are the touches of tender and minute observation . . . gate-bars with drops of fog-dew on them:

Like silver buttons set in a row
And as equally spaced as if measured, although
They fall at the feeblest jog.

. . . swallows flying in the river-gleam "in the curves of an eight" . . . as he travels by barren farms "gulls glint out like silver flecks" . . . "the shiver of morning, a little before the false dawn" . . . "The sun lay west, like a crimson wound." These are the dearest of his tiny triumphs to us who know the novels by heart, of which they remind us. How long, how long ago, it is since Tess had her love-time in summer-time in the deep meadows, and shall we never forgive him for creating Angel Clare to take and leave her unkissed that night under the little sprigs of mistletoe? There is no passion in Mr. Hardy's hardly-perceived poetry; there is little enough in the ancient folk, the wreckage of many aristocracies, that get a living out of thin-soiled uplands in the corner of Wessex where he lives. He has no passion, but he makes no pretence of it. He is guiltless of the pumped-up ecstasy. And even his "Robin" is temperamental (not the little, strutting, half-uniformed bully of reality nor the lover of human beings in Allingham's song) for he sings his first stave to please the two-day-old Joy of Blake's song as follows:

When up aloft
I fly and fly,
I see in pools
The shining sky,
And a happy bird
Am I, am I!

and ends it thus:

But when it hails,
And snows still fall,
I get to feel
No grief at all,
For I turn to a cold stiff
Feathery ball!

to pleasure some friend of Verlaine's up from the country. And he thinks himself a kinsman of the Prussian—or thinks he thinks so!

The Occult Review July 1918

MOMENTS OF VISION, AND MISCELLANEOUS VERSES. By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., St. Martin's Street. Price 6s. net.

IT is impossible to be coldly impersonal in reviewing these poems, the work of a master-craftsman. Their effect upon the reader, or on one reader at least, is much like that produced by a superb violinist whose technique is perfect even though the theme may not always be to one's liking. Mr. Hardy simply plays with our complex English tongue. Words are to him as toys, and jewels and pebbles. As jewels they leave behind a radiance not easily forgotten; as toys they make us smile; but they are mere pebbles when, for instance, in *Lines to My Father's Violin* he asks:

"Does he want you down there
In the nether glooms . . . ?"

and answers, in true Calvinistic mood:

"Well, you cannot, alas,
The barrier overpass
That screens him in those mournful meads hereunder,
Where no fiddling can be heard
In the glades
Of silentness, no bird
Thrills the shades;
Where no viol is touched for songs or serenades,
No bowing makes a congregation's wonder."

The poem entitled *Old Furniture* touches a truer note, while in *The Glimpse* we have a flash of Reality. But to-day we are most in accord with the *Poems of War and Patriotism*, which conclude the volume. It is curious that the first of these, *His Country*, should have been written before the war. It embodies the natural question asked by most thoughtful minds: 'How to be national yet universal? . . . . Why could not this brilliant thinker and marvellous master of words have soared farther into the light!

EDITH K. HARPER.

The Poetry Review Feb. 1918

MOMENTS OF VISION AND MISCELLANEOUS VERSE. By Thomas Hardy (Macmillan, 6s. net).

Mr. Hardy remains the greatest poet of our time. With a mastery of art and a grip on life equally masterful, he possesses vision and utterance beyond all his contemporaries. All his rhythmic power and profundity of thought are displayed in his latest remarkable volume in which music and message, the personal outlook, and the play of destiny are blended incomparably.

Western Mail (Perth)
March 8. 1918

"Moments of Vision," by Thomas Hardy. Macmillan and Co., Ltd., London.)

What Ruskin would have called "Imagination Penetrative" lends a sort of sombre power to the lines written near Kanivet, in 1872. A man and a woman, walking together, pause to rest in the twilight by a stunted handpost at the crossways. The woman leans back against it, arms outstretched "Her sad face sideways thrown."

Her white-clothed form at this dim-lit end of day
Made her look as one crucified
In my gaze at her from the midst of the dusty way.
And hurriedly "Don't," I cried.
They move off, and the same thought strikes the woman, too.
She heavily breathed as we trailed;
Till she said, "I did not think how 'twould look in the shade,
When I leant there like one nailed."
I, lightly: "There's nothing in it. For you, anyhow!"
—"Oh, I know, there is not," said she. . . .
"Yet I wonder. . . . If no one is bodily crucified now,
In spirit one may be!"
And we dragged on and on while we seemed to see
In the running of Time's far glass
Her crucified, as she had wondered if she might be
Some day.—alas, alas!

We are brought back again to a cynical, but very human, mood in the young girl's lament over her pink frock.

"O my pretty pink frock,
I shan't be able to wear it!
Why is he dying just now?
I hardly can bear it!
He might have contrived to live on;
But they say there's no hope whatever:
And must I shut myself up,
And go out never
O my pretty pink frock,
Puff-sleeved and accordion-pleated!
He might have passed in July,
And me uncheated!"

But we prefer Mr. Hardy in his moments of vision. Such an one as came to him in August, 1913, for instance, when

Something tapped on the pane of my room
When there was never a trace
Of wind or rain, and I saw in the gloom
My weary Beloved's face.

"O I am tired of waiting," she said,
"Night, morn, noon, afternoon;
So cold it is in my lonely bed,
And I thought you would join me soon!"

I rose and neared the window-glass,
But vanished thence had she:
Only a pallid moth, alas,
Tapped at the pane for me.

Daily Chronicle
Dec. 15. 1917

THE NEW VERSE OF MR. THOMAS HARDY.

MOMENTS OF VISION, by Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan. 6s. net.

Mr. Hardy's verse touches one with such prosperous power because he is consummately a novelist even in verse. In this book, as in his "Satires of Circumstance," one is again and again delighted by the way in which the charm of his people survives the ordeal of metrical transcription. Though his poetry, owing to his irony and doubt, does not deliver the manna of Paradise, it does such good work as only the inspired can do. It immortalises those aspects of people which no ordinary portraiture can present, because they result from the exertion of memory as well as eyesight.

I have spoken of the uppermost effect of Mr. Hardy's book, but a general impression must not exclude from particular mention the delightful complaint of an amorous tree ("The Tree and the Lady"), a brilliant satire called "The Sponsors," and another surprisingly original story in verse entitled "The Statue of Liberty." Mr. Hardy's metres are both fit and various; they please, as those of old song-books do, by movements which seem instinctive. They are, as it were, not the metres of sedentary habit but of life working irresistibly on the moods of an out-of-door man.

W. H. CHESSON.

Montrose Standard
March 1. 1918

MOMENTS OF VISION AND MISCELLANEOUS VERSES. By Thomas Hardy. (London: Macmillan & Co.) 6s.

Mr Hardy reminds us of a musician known to us long ago, who attained a certain degree of mastery of every instrument played in the orchestra he conducted. As if for experiment's sake, he tries many measures, and if the results show differences of merit they also display rare and wonderful skill, and assured command of his instrument. To give them still greater variety of form, feeling, thought, and quality, the poems here brought together are the fruits of widely separated years between the fifties and the present time. They represent many moods and many stages in the poet's development. That the collection will not greatly affect our estimate of the poet we already know, or the author of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," "The Woodlanders," and the series of romances recalled by the name of Hardy, is not said in disparagement. It is only intended to bespeak allowances for inequalities intellectual, emotional, and executive, since the pieces manifestly cannot display a like degree of maturity, and to re-impress the old warning that, in the formation of a general judgment, a poet is not, after the timber-beam parallel, to be measured by the weakest effort, but by his highest and best achievement. Without such a reminder, moreover, it might seem incomprehensible that "The Dead and the Living One" should have come from the same source as "Afternoon Service at Mellstock." The former is dated 1915 and the latter about 1850, but the flight of years alone cannot account for the disparity between the first named and the closing verse of "The Voice of Things," or the banality of the wooer's plea in "Why be at Pains?"—

"O should not we two join hands? waits
I am alone;
You would enrich me more than lands
By being my own."

In "The Voice," standing on a headland forty years ago, he had heard the waves huzza in joy; twenty years later their note was changed to "wagging in a long ironic laughter at the lot of men." Then

"Wheeling change has set me again standing where
Once I heard the waves huzza at Lammas-tide;
But they supplicate now—like a congregation there
Who murmur the Confession—I outside,
Prayer denied."

In this, as in other instances, the thought is finer than the craftsmanship.

The truth comes in many guises that the universal element in poetry springs from the commonplace, since out of the common experience, the common despair, the common lot at last, the tragedy of human life is woven. Then there are the closing group of "Poems of War and Patriotism," marked by varying degrees of force, beauty ("In Time of 'The Breaking of Nations'"), and originality, and it is amongst them that we found our first choice, "The Dead and the Living One." It, however, is only to be judged in its entirety. A marble statue cannot be appraised by examining a chip. Neither can this collection of more than one hundred and fifty poems be judged by a few samples. Read in hours of leisure it is companionable in many moods, when fancy is most airily active, when imagination is ready to take wing, when thought is strong, in the hour of meditation upon the all-enveloping mystery, and when the heart is heavy. Its appeal is wide as the shades and bounds of human nature.

Cambridge Magazine Dec 15. 17

Finally, we come to Mr. Thomas Hardy's latest volume *Moments of Vision* (Macmillan & Co., 6s. net, postage 8d.), in which he seems to have used verse as a convenient form of summary for the plots of the novels he will no longer write! As short stories many of these poems are masterly and have the fine poignancy so characteristic of the novels.

Like everything Mr. Hardy writes the book is strangely absorbing, and every now and then there are such things as this:—

". . . If someone said on Christmas Eve
'Come; see the oxen kneel
In the lonely barton by yonder comb
Our children used to know,'
I should go with him in the gloom
Hoping it might be so."

But the picture of the Almighty contemplating the handiwork of his creatures is more characteristic of Mr. Hardy's genius, and though he has been deeply moved by the war the author of *Time's Laughing Stocks* can still reveal himself—playfully introspective. Like the moon gazing in at his window, he has scanned his fellow men and seen them without bitterness and without hope.

"And now I am curious to look
Into the blinkered mind
Of one who wants to write a book
In a world of such a kind."

Literary World Jan 3 1918

THOMAS HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses. By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan. 6s. net.)

Roughly speaking, there are two tendencies in English poetry—the one conservative, preserving jealously traditional forms and subjects; the other radical, ever seeking a fitting embodiment of forward-reaching ideas and aspirations. The one reaches beauty by way of careful exclusion; the other is more concerned with what is significant, and the beauty it looks for is the outcome of an all-embracing synthesis of life. These tendencies are not necessarily antithetical, although to the casual and biased critic they may seem to be opposed. In all ages there have existed these two types or modifications of them. Donne tried to give a new direction in technique and subject to English verse, but was told for his pains that he deserved hanging for not keeping accent. Meredith, with an equally original vision of life, moulded verse to fit the exigencies of his emotions, and was told that he had not mastered the technique of poetry. Similar irrelevant objections are made to Mr. Hardy's verse by our backward-looking critics, who lose their bearings when a writer of genius discards the accepted forms and metaphors, and creates for himself a new medium of expression.

It was, no doubt, a feeling that his poetry would not fit easily into the scheme of things which kept Mr. Hardy from publishing his verse until late in life. It was a wise prevision. In the 'seventies the starry thoughts, 'delicate as lamp-worms' lucency,' would have met with mild derision; now we cherish them as authentic moments of vision.

Southport Guardian Jan 12 1918

"MOMENTS OF VISION," by THOMAS HARDY (Macmillan, 6/- net).

Mr. Hardy may yet be remembered primarily as poet and not as novelist. There is a profundity of thought, a dignity of utterance, a realistic quality in his setting of personal moods and moments of vision that all suggest permanence; no one more clearly reads the rustic mind or delineates the rustic character; the simple things and thoughts are transfigured and idealised into permanence; and, in his war poems especially, there is a quality of calm, clear candour that expresses the real British character. So One of the freshest of the poems is that on the comparatively conventional subject, "To Shakespeare," with its fine opening:

"Bright, baffling Soul, least capturable of themes,
Thou, who display'dst a life of commonplace,
Leaving no intimate word or personal trace
Of high design outside the artistry
Of thy penned dreams,
Still shalt remain at heart unread eternally";

a poem remarkable because it shows us "the bright baffling soul" of Shakespeare in its "human orbits" at Stratford.

So Mr. Hardy is a natural yet rugged singer of humanity, a grim yet sympathetic observer of nature, a frank and almost stern exponent of life's philosophy. There are frequently crudities of poetic expression, for Mr. Hardy is no facile craftsman, and his phrasing is not plastic or malleable but chiselled from the granite. Yet his verse has something of the same quality which Rodin gave to his statues; and in power, in poignancy of expression, in subtlety in catching the exact mood of the moment, and in introspective psychology this book is a unique expression.

Colne Valley Guardian June 21. 1918

"MOMENTS OF VISION," by Thomas Hardy.—MacMillans, 6s. net.

It is always an event of some importance when a great writer like Thomas Hardy publishes a new book, be it in prose or poetry. His fame is too secure for any critic's lance and his reputation durable so long as English literature lasts. Most people, however, know Hardy only through his novels, and scarcely realise the value and importance of his poetical work. Hardy was ever a poet, and if he chose the medium of prose to express his thought and feeling it was rather that his message to his age should be direct and free from the trammels and limitations of verse. In his early manhood Hardy devoted himself to the writing of poetry. He intended to be a poet, and a great poet in the end he has become. He has told us in a preface that the reception of "Jude the Obscure" completely cured him of his interest in novel writing. That may be true. A deeper truth may be that he realised that his work as a novelist was completed and that the time had once more arrived when his message should find poetical expression.

Northern Whig 20 Dec. 1917

MOMENTS OF VISION AND MISCELLANEOUS VERSES. By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan & Co. 6s net.

Mr. Hardy, many people think, is more likely to be remembered for his verse than his fiction. Whether that is so or not, there can be no doubt that some of his verse will

Westminster Gazette
Dec 8. 1917

MR. HARDY'S POETRY.

"Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan.) 6s. net.

Mr. Hardy's verse is a phenomenon even more perplexing than his prose. Judging from his prose alone, it might be predicted that verse, being the more concentrated, intense, and rapid form of expression, would purge the author of those clumsy turns of speech which abound in his novels; or it might be guessed that these turns would be enough to debar Mr. Hardy from ever writing verse, which demands of its nature to be easy and accomplished. But, oddly enough, neither prediction would be correct; for Mr. Hardy imports into his verse all the defects of his prose, and contrives to write great poetry in spite of the handicap. Poetry, all experience teaches us, can be killed by a jarring note in the style; and the jarring note is almost the favourite sound in Mr. Hardy's gamut. There is a piece in the present volume which describes how a woman found her husband day-dreaming over an old portrait of herself, and grew at length so jealous of her own lost beauty that she destroyed the portrait. Mr. Hardy gives the climax of this grim and characteristic fancy thus:

Well, such was my jealousy at last,
I destroyed that face of the former me;
Could you ever have believed a woman
Would act so foolishly?

From the point of view of style and expression, every word there is inept beyond admiration; but the whole poem is nevertheless successful; and, though the feeling of strangeness is never lost, the reader can at last allow the inner fire of the piece to work upon his spirit. [The reviewer, having no sense of humour, misses the point.]

The example is not singular; it is easy to find a whole poem in which all the phrasing is wrong:

"It never looks like summer here
On Beeny by the sea."
But though to her its look was drear
Summer it seemed to me.

It never looks like summer now,
Whatever weather's there;
But then it cannot anyhow
On Beeny or elsewhere!

It can be imagined that, say, Mr. A. E. Housman would have made of that, finding its sentiment related to his own, a jewel of exact wording; but it is doubtful whether he could have invaded the soul with the murderous gloom which Mr. Hardy evokes by using the first clumsy words that come to his hand.

It is not easy to lay a finger precisely on what is wrong with this vocabulary. A stanza of another piece, in which the dying man's wife laments that her new frock will now be no use to her, offers a suggestion:

O my pretty pink frock,
Puff-sleeved and accordion-pleated!
He might have passed in July
And me uncheated!

(The reviewer is obviously a woman from her preoccupation with dress.)

It is possible that Mr. Hardy's language is old-fashioned in the style of the remarkable piece of dressmaking which he describes—not with the antique pomp of the Augustans, but with the heavy stiffness of the later nineteenth century. This guess comes, perhaps, as near as any critical hazard can to the elusive and difficult truth. His vocabulary resembles Turner's pigments. He uses the wrong vocabulary, he uses words that obviously do not mean to others what they mean to him, he uses the most perishable materials that any artist of similar rank has ever handled; but with the sweepings of literary style he works miracles. Critics are fond of observing that it is the mark of a true poet that words in his poems seem to gather together mean more than the sum of their several meanings; but examples are generally taken from poets with exquisite vocabularies. Mr. Hardy's work gives a better proof of this power in poetry; for he can exercise it by means of words and phrases the several meanings of which are not merely less than their meaning in combination, but are positively grotesque.

As the citations given above will perhaps have indicated, this new volume differs neither in vocabulary nor in spirit from its predecessors. The fact that a few poems have recent dates attached suggests that the remainder are gleaned from earlier years; but there is no important change perceptible between the earlier and the later pieces. It would not be fair to allege that every one of the hundred and fifty-odd pieces here printed is pitched in a melancholy key. There are notably a number in which the unrest of love-longing is still pleasant and has not been made bitter by loss. But in the majority Mr. Hardy does his customary worst against the possibilities. In "The Duel" a wife provokes her husband to fight with a man who has publicly proclaimed himself her lover. The husband is killed; and the wife, disguised as a page, leads out the victor's horse from a neighbouring brake and rides away with him. In "Honeymoon-time at an Inn" the young couple are harassed by an old pier-glass in their room falling and breaking. The young wife weeps at the portent; the Spirits Ironic laugh and the Spirits of Pity inquire:

"More, what shall happen to prove the truth of the portent?"
—"Oh; in brief, they will fade till old,
And their love grow numbed ere death, by the cark of care."
—"But nought see we that asks for portents there?"—
"'Tis the lot of all."—"Well, no less true is a portent
That is rife all mortal mould."

It is rather dangerous to find in Mr. Hardy's poems the philosophic despair with which critics generally credit him and which perhaps he believes himself to have achieved. Some of his poems [illegible], in this volume, "The Robin"—are efforts to look [illegible] side of life too resolute to spring from a wholly natural [illegible]. [illegible] Mr. Hardy's character is not written in [illegible] but it may possibly be discerned in the sum [illegible]. Had he completely despaired, he might [illegible] as a great epic and abandoned eighteen volumes of prose fiction and five volumes of verse, to say nothing of "The Dynasts"; he would have been more likely to have created an unreal paradise than a tragic Wessex. The truth that is concealed behind these surmises is hard to capture. It is too crude to say that he loves life so much that he embraces its ugly side with his first rapture, or that he can trust himself to face all the blackness before attempting the glory. Such phrases as these crush rather than capture the meaning of a rare and gigantic spirit; but they do point towards its meaning. Whatever may be the origin of his gloom, it leaves him with enough courage and sublimity of temper to write this, his finest war-poem:

Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow, silent walk,
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

Only thin smoke without flame,
From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by:
War's annals will cloud into night,
Ere their story die.

Even here his clumsiness of diction pursues him. "Stalk" in the fourth line is as far as possible from what he means; and "wight" in the ninth is a most unhappy word. But it does not matter.

The writer of the above review has no sense whatever of comparative values (if she is honest), & fills her article with trivialities, mostly untrue. She can never have seen an old horse harrowing, for his motion is precisely a "stalk". She drags in the word "clumsy" four times to describe the writing; so that on the whole the probability is that the review is a dishonest one, prompted by spite, but compelled by the editor to add the saving phrase "but it does not matter."

Oxford Chronicle Jan 18. 1918

MR. HARDY'S PERSONAL VISION.*

Both in its poetry and its philosophy Mr. Hardy's latest volume, "Moments of Vision," reinforces and even reiterates. It conveys no new communication, it sets forth no fresh vision, and though this is in part accounted for by the fact that though most of the verse is undated some of the dates which are given go back twenty and thirty years, the reinforcement is mainly the outcome of a mind steadfast in its faith and an eye consistent in its seeing. The drama "Near Lanivet 1872," alike in its essence and its presentation, is precisely such a drama as Mr. Hardy has caught up into the formative control of his solidly-swaying rhythms many times during the last five years, and if he relegates "certain starry thoughts" to The seventies, here in the verse of to-day is still a creed which may well lift man's eyes to the heavens:

In the seventies I was bearing in my breast,
Penned tight,
Certain starry thoughts that threw a magic light
On the worktimes and the soundless hours of rest
In the seventies: aye, I bore them in my breast
Penned tight.

It is poetry intensely personal and even more intensely comprehensive, in which memories common to all humanity interpose as phantoms, where voiceless questions find their voice and nameless terrors their name and in which life's end has a greater significance than life's beginning—"and I looked over at the dead men's dwelling-places." It is full of hauntings:

Yea, that which one could breathe and plead!—
Skimming along with spectre-speed
To a fast tryst with me.

and again:

There are three folk driving in a quaint old chaise,
And the cliff-side track looks green and fair;

of regrets:

O the regrettings infinite
When the night processions flit
Through the mind!

of bitterness and knowledge:

When hard utilitarian times
Had stilled the sweet Saint-Peter's chimes
I learnt to see
That bale may spring where blisses are,
And one desired might be afar
Though near to me.

yet the old values have still their high assessment:

Will these be always great things,
Great things to me?

and upon the commonest things is fixed the greatest price:

Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk,
With an old horse that stumbles and nods,
Half-asleep as they stalk.

Only thin smoke without flame

*"Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses. Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 6s. net.

Glasgow Herald Dec. 6 1917

MR HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

"Moments of Vision." By Thomas Hardy. 6s net. (London: Macmillan and Co.)

A man's work is more or less a mirror of himself; his very choice of them i sa clue to character. But rarely does any body of work so faithfully reflect its author as that of Thomas Hardy. Novel, drama, and lyric are all of a piece, and "Moments of Vision" differs from the rest of his writings not in the nature but in the intensity of the revelation, and even there not greatly. At a first glance it is a sad vision of life that is shown, with but fleeting glimpses of brightness that cannot blind us to the ultimate desolation of death. Summed up, its philosophy might be expressed in the brief injunction—"Live bravely all the same," where "all the same" stands for all disillusionment. Yet the visions are strangely kindly, and even the utterances of the Ironic Spirit touch the founts of tears. The men and women who appear before us are so human in their weaknesses that harsh judgment is impossible. Compassion falls like snow and softly as a snowfall ceases, so here a poem closes, with a shroud of quiet enfolding good and evil now made one by death. One can always test a poet by the mood he induces, and we can say of Hardy that, while the radiant colours of life are in his poetry but a flash amid grey and spring but a mocking prelude to autumn and eternal winter, a courageous patience humanises all and a warm pulse beats at the heart of the greyness. His evenest most quietly flowing verse will speak of a deeper passion than is to be found in all the lyrics of the cavaliers, and alongside the saddest tragedy stands the strange figure of romance, now as a youth in a dark street gazing up with full heart at a lit window, now as a vision of hat and feather seen above the filmy fog-fleece hastening to the love-tryst, now embodied in "certain starry thoughts that threw a magic light" on the seventies. But the tenderest beauty hovers about the many lyrics—half song, half reverie—that tell of lost lovers. They are sad, of course, but we would not have them otherwise, for their sadness is the measure of their love and their sincerity, and none will read "The Five Students," or "The Clock-winder," or the poems somewhat akin to these, "Old Furniture," "The Pedigree," the curiously poignant poem "The Photograph," and many another without being won to a wider sympathy, without being wrought to a fuller and richer harmony with a life in which nothing is common, but where all is in common from the joy of love to the sorrow of the last parting. Could any reproach be more gentle, yet more subtly moving, than this from "The Upbraiding"?—

Now I am dead you sing to me
The songs we used to know;
But while I lived you had no wish
Or care for doing so.

Now I am dead you come to me
In the moonlight comfortless;
Ah, what would I have given alive
To win such tenderness!

Almost every poem, however small, is a life-story, yet all are poems, with their own music, cunning music we would say, if it were not that their simplicity seems so straightforward as to deny art, as in this interior vision away down the past, in "Old Furniture," of the hands of those who have touched each chair and table—

Hands behind hands, growing paler and paler,
As in a mirror a candle-flame
Shows images of itself, each frailer
As it recedes, though the eye may frame
Its shape the same

The Sphere - Dec. 1917 or Jan. 1918.

THE NEW POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY.*

In a recent work on English Poetry Sir Henry Newbolt writes: "In this country the public do not like reconsidering their judgments, nor do they like the effort which is involved in mastering anything which is complex. The result is that in all the arts a man is too often expected to limit the line of his development by his earliest successful performance."

To no writer does this apply more fully than to Thomas Hardy. Because he wrote splendidly, in earlier years, of shepherds and carol-singers and rusticity, the unthinking public has been wont to demand such in continual repetition, and is even now apt to disregard the maturer thought, the Ligher point of view, the more finished artistry of the poems. However, here they are—a hundred-and-fifty of them—poems which have this in common with the novels that they are largely dramatic and scenic; that is, they suggest special places where the emotion arose, and with which they are intimately connected. Even where no background is given, and no place is mentioned, we are still conscious of an environment which has its being in Wessex, or in what the author calls "Off-Wessex," or "Lyonesse," *i.e.*, Cornwall.

Mr. Hardy has already paid a generous tribute in verse to three of his contemporaries, and here he gives a fourth poem in memory of a poet who was long a neighbour and a friend of his, "The Last Signal: A Memory of William Barnes." The foot-note, "Winterborne-Came Path," shows that the spot where the incident took place is within a few minutes' walk of Mr. Hardy's own house, and within view of the rectory where William Barnes, an earlier Dorset poet, breathed his last.

Some critics dwell on what they term the "depressing" nature of some of Mr. Hardy's poetry. On examination it is found that the pieces in this book divide roughly into three moods, one-third of the poems being neutral in tone, one-third cheerful, and one-third sombre. None is hilarious, it is true, but can any thinking person whose soul is touched with pity for mankind look on the world to-day and feel that this proportion outrages his experience? The true lover of humanity is he who has courage to face the sorrows of his fellow-creatures, for in this way only can any remedy be found.

However, they who demand cheerfulness may find it in the present volume. Let them turn to "Timing Her," with its fine flow of music and happy lilt:—

Lalage's come; aye,
Come is she now, O!
Does Heaven allow, O,
A meeting to be?

Yes, she is here now,
Here now, here now,
Nothing to fear now,
Here's Lalage!

And there is the concluding verse of another poem, "Great Things," which carries a sublime message:—

Will these be always great things,
Great things to me?
Let it befall that one will call,
"Soul, I have need of thee":
What then? Joy-jaunts, impassioned flings,
Love, and its ecstasy,
Will always have been great things,
Great things to me!

A section of the volume is devoted to poems of war and patriotism, all of which have the same spirit of compassion and indignant pity for suffering. As poetry the one that will probably be preferred is entitled "In Time of the Breaking of Nations":—

Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

The concluding poem, "Afterwards," has an intimate pathos, and might be taken as a farewell to his readers, although one hopes that this may not be so. Here again is the voice of the Pities speaking through human lips:—

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
Will they say, "He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,
But he could do little for them; and now he is gone?"

Future generations will perhaps have something different to tell, for a poet who has consistently preached humanity and tenderness can hardly be said to have "done little."

* MOMENTS OF VISION. By Thomas Hardy. 6s. (*Macmillan.*)

cutting from The Spectator of

March 16 1918

THE visions[1] recorded in Mr. Hardy's poems are nearly all of the past—visions seen in the magic mirror which "works well in these night hours of ache," and reveals "tincts we never see ourselves once take When the world is awake." The mirror reveals the skeleton at the feast, unobserved of the feasters; wordless ironies; unheeded warnings; the dead in the quick. This "visioning power" of a "scathed and memoried man" brings little solace, though he recalls with something like pride his "starry thoughts" in the "seventies" which nothing could darken or destroy. His mood is often strangely sombre:—

"I travel as a phantom now,
For people do not wish to see
In flesh and blood so bare a bough
As Nature makes of me.
And thus I visit bodiless
Strange gloomy households oft at odds,
And wonder if Man's consciousness
Was a mistake of God's.
And next I meet you, and I pause,
And think that if mistake it were,
As some have said, O then it was
One that I well can bear."

These ghostly journeyings form the theme of many poems, some with "sweet reverberances," but mostly tragic, grim, or *macabre*. The worst blows, the writer would fain believe, are not struck by man, but by the Immanent Doer That does not know,

"Which in some age unguessed of us
May lift Its blinding incubus,
And see and own
'It grieves me I did thus and thus!'"

This strange surmise recurs in the vision of the spirits waiting for "one called God . . . to know how things have been going on in the world and below it," in the belief that though they "have reached feeling faster than he, he will overtake us anon, If the world goes on." Yet this notion of blind destiny is shot through at times with tenderness for the old faith and something like a longing that it might prove true—as in the poem on the oxen kneeling on Christmas Eve—or that the "fourth figure the Furnace showed" might reveal its "shape sublime in these latter days." But there is little of hope or joy in these moments of vision, save in the beautiful little poem on the children irradiating the squalid railway waiting-room. Of the miscellaneous poems, that on Shakespeare after three hundred years is a noble tribute to Shakespeare's unnoticed passing and eternal influence. The group of "Poems of War and Patriotism" are noteworthy for their freedom from animosity. "The pity of it" is the dominant note. Mr. Hardy laments the decline of chivalry in war; he wishes no richer malediction on the Kaiser than that he should feel compassion for his victims on his death-bed. Finally, we may note the lines "Afterwards," which suggest an epitaph on himself as one who used to notice the glory of May and the ways of shy birds, who loved innocent creatures and had an eye for the mysteries of the full-starred heavens and an ear for the passing bell.

* (1) *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses.* By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan and Co. [6s. net.]—[illegible]

The L. P. A. Monthly Jan. 1918

MOMENTS OF VISION, AND MISCELLANEOUS VERSES. By Thomas Hardy. 6/- net. (Macmillan & Co., Ltd., London.)

"Many men are poets in their youth," but Mr. Hardy in his old age is still a poet, and for him there yet endures "throughout all change the indomitable song." His new volume includes not only poems that have been written in his latest years, but many which were penned when he was younger, and it is interesting, on comparing them, to find how little his method or his material has changed with the passing of time. In his earlier and his later verse he is equally resolute to avoid anything in the shape of poetic diction, anything that even nearly approaches a concession to poetic convention. With fine language he will have nothing to do, with rhetoric or idle adornment he is too proud and too chaste a craftsman to concern himself. For him there is only the ideal conception to express, and the starkest and sternest strictness of speech wherewith to express it. The smoothness and roundness of mere prettiness he will not tolerate for an instant. Everything must be strong, simple, hewed with a few vigorous chisel-thrusts and mallet-taps out of the elemental marble of his thought. Indeed it is scarcely marble that is the material he works upon. Is it not rather ebony, or some dark, ragged rock, veined here and there with ruddy streaks of blood or iron? As he will make no concessions to prettiness of method, neither will he to any prettiness of sentiment. He is not anxious to please or soothe his reader, his one desire is to express the truth of life as he has seen it, as it is dimmed or lightened by the sun or shade of his own personality. Indeed it would often seem that his aim is to shock his reader into attention, to stir his hearers to reflection by a deliberate asperity of thought or of speech. In such a mood he will permit himself an almost savage irony, as, for instance, in the last verse of that strange, crude, yet powerful poem "The Statue of Liberty":

"His child, my model, held so saintly,
Grand in feature,
Gross in nature,
In the dens of vice had died."

The sudden, bitter revelation is almost like a blow in the face to a sympathetic reader! But whatever his methods may be, Mr. Hardy is justified of them, by his constant attainment to the expression of Beauty. An attainment which is due to his singleness of purpose, to the stern sincerity of his vision, and the simple candour of his utterance. His last volume is worthy of the man, worthy of the loneliest, proudest and most heroic figure in the literature of our day.

X.

The Dial (N. Y.) Jan 31. 1918.

Mr. Hardy's book is a glorious collection of over one hundred and fifty new poems, not one of which is not thoroughly characteristic, none of which are without merit, and a large proportion of which are in his very best manner. But there is nothing new to say about Mr. Hardy. As is only natural, he shows no special change or development. He continues to perform miracles with a style which would at once sink any other poet to the bottom; and he sends the reader away in a state of mind in which only delight at the power of his poetry mitigates the profound gloom it induces.

Westminster
Dec 8. 1917

The Queen
March 2 1918

* *Moments of Vision.* By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan. 6s. net.)

RECENT POETRY.

A VOLUME of Thomas Hardy's poems is at any time an event, and in the present volume* we have some of his best verses—among them "The Oxen," "The Breaking of Nations," "The Pity of It," and "Often When Warring." Of these the craftsmanship is wonderful as ever—the exquisite clearness, even if acid-bitter clearness, of line.

The Adelaide Register
Feb 16: 1918

—Prose v. Poetry.—

The position of the veteran novelist, Thomas Hardy, is much to be regretted. When a man begins late in life to write poetry, the result is apt to be most unsatisfactory; but ordinarily that affects nobody but himself. This, however, is a man known wherever the language is spoken. He is a great novelist, and the "superior" critics have taken up the pose that he is also a great poet. With the harmless vanity of the aged, he now turns out stuff like this:—

"I think," said the vicar,
"A rural service quirky
. . . . . etc.

Daily Graphic
Jan. 4 1918

"MOMENTS OF VISION."

A COLLECTION OF MISCELLANEOUS VERSE BY THOMAS HARDY.

Literature hardly provides a finer example of faithfulness to an ideal than Thomas Hardy's persistent wooing of the muse. Beginning his writing career as a poet in 1866, he is rounding it out in the same medium, having, in the interval, conquered in the realm of fiction. His greatest work in poetry, "The Dynasts," is too vast and exacting ever to become popular; but in his latest volume, "Moments of Vision" (Macmillan, 6s. net), there are many poems which should become as familiar as his novels. But it is difficult to understand why the best of his war poems, "Song of the Soldiers," has not been included.

Both in the war and pre-war verses in this book what has been called the English quality of Mr. Hardy's poetry is pronounced. We have here, "the delight in English scenes and characters, in ancient unmoving rusticities," which is so marked in the Wessex novels. And equally marked is that typical Hardy view of life which regards human beings as the sport of powers too strong for human control. As an example of how he can drive home a never-out-of-date lesson, "An Upbraiding" is as telling as any of the shorter pieces:—

Now I am dead you sing to me
The songs we used to know,
But while I lived you had no wish
Or care for doing so.

Now I am dead you come to me
In the moonlight, comfortless;
Ah, what would I have given alive
To win such tenderness!

When you are dead, and stand to me,
Not differenced, as now,
But like again, will you be cold
As when we lived, or how?

There are sixteen poems of war and patriotism, including the ringing "Call to National Service," with its poignant climax:—

Would years but let me stir as once I stirred
At many a dawn to take the forward track,
And with a stride plunged on to enterprise,
I now would speed like yester wind that whirred
Through yielding pines; and serve with never a slack,
So loud for promptness all around outcries!

Cutting from Y. Goleuad
Feb. 8. 1918

HARDY.

Nid af i ddywedyd llawer y tro liwn am farddoniaeth Thomas Hardy; yr wyf wedi dywedyd cryn lawer am dano o dro i dro yn y "Goleuad." Ond crefftwr gwaew ydyw. Y mae ei feddyliau yn ddyfnion ac yn aml yn hardd. Synfyfyria uwchben y byd a'i bobl, ac y mae ganddo lawer i'w ddywedyd sydd yn apelio at y meddwl ystyriol. Ond nid yw yn medru ei ddywedyd yn rhwydd. Y mae ei fynegi ei hun, gwaith caletaf yr artist bob amser, yn amlwg yn waith caled iawn iddo ef. Ac y mae yr afrwyddineb yn dyfod i'r amlwg yn aml, yng nghlonc ei linellau ac mewn ambell air a ymddengys allan o'i le, fel pe buasai'r bardd wedi ei fabwysiadu ar ol anobeithio cael hyd i un gwell. Wrth ddywedyd hyn dylid cofio mai dyma anhawster mawr pob llenor o athrylith, neu hyd yn oed y llenor na fedd arlliw o athrylith, dim ond parch cyffredin i'w grefft a chydwybod i'w thrin orau y medro. Un peth yw meddu syniadau barddonol—barddoniaeth yn yr enaid, ond peth arall, tra gwahanol, yw mynegi hwnw. Trwy lafur diorffwys y mae gyrhaedd meistrolaeth ar hyny, ac nid all ambell un gyrhaedd meistrolaeth er pob ymdrech. Gellir meddwl mai un o'r rhai hyny yw Mr. Hardy mewn barddoniaeth, ac hyd yn oed yn ei ryddiaith ceir darnau a gwaith garw arnynt yma a thraw. Er hyny y mae ei farddoniaeth bob amser yn bwysig ac yn ddyddorol, ac ar adegau cyrhaedda urddas a symlrwydd gwych iawn. Dyma engraifft o hyny yn y gân "Yr Ychen," lle y mae wedi cyfleu holl brydferthwch ac ystyr hen draddodiad, ynghyda hiraeth dyn a gollodd ei ffydd mewn pethau felly am y ffydd a gollodd:—

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.
"Now they are all on their knees,"
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
"Come; see the oxen kneel

"In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

* * *

REVIEWS

IN THE LOG-ROLLER'S HUT

MASTER AND PUPILS*

I FIRST had Mr. Hardy's book with me on the Brighton Railway on a raw December morning, and the comparison that came into my mind as the train slowed down, was between these multitudinous lyrics and the platforms, almost as many, of Clapham Junction; grey and cold and stony, but some of them quickened where the electric current passes. Later in the day I saw them again as the village churches clustered in Mr. Hardy's Dorset: some old and grey and stony, with here the fragment of a rood-loft stair, there a hagioscope, a piece of carved stone or an indecipherable brass, others newly and rawly constructed in red brick, but all of them blessed by an immanent spirit. The quantity of Mr. Hardy's lyrical work blinds one to the excellence of his achievement. It is interesting to remark that, at the end of 1900 there was no place found for him in the Oxford Book of English Verse. Since then, some years of his time have been absorbed in the construction of the Dynasts, and yet the increasing merit of his lyrical volumes have placed him easily first among contemporary poets. Who else could have written

THE BLINDED BIRD.

"So zestfully canst thou sing
And all this indignity,
With God's consent, of thee!
Blinded ere yet a-wing
By the red-hot needle thou
I stand and wonder how
So zestfully thou canst sin!
Resenting not such wrong
Thy grievous pain forgot,
Eternal dark thy lot,
Groping thy whole life long,
After that stab of fire;
Enjailed in pitiless wire;
Resenting not such wrong!

Who hath charity? This bird,
Who suffereth long and is kind,
Is not provoked, though blind
And alive unsepulchred?
Who hopeth, endureth all things?
Who thinketh no evil, but sings?
Who is divine? This bird."

This is, of course, Mr. Hardy at his best—but it is a level which he constantly reaches. More characteristic of him (compare indeed a poignant scene in "The Mayor of Casterbridge) is

THE CAGED GOLDFINCH.

"Within a churchyard, on a recent grave
I saw a little cage
That jailed a goldfinch. All was silence save
Its hops from stage to stage.

There was inquiry in its wistful eye,
And once it tried to sing;
Of him or her who placed it there and why,
No one knew anything.

True, a woman was found drowned the day ensuing,
And some at times averred
The grave to be her false ones, who when wooing
Gave her the bird."

So, again, in "Before Marching and After" he ends

When the heath wore the robe of late summer
And the fuchsia's-bells, hot in the sun,
Hung red by the door, a quick comer
Brought tidings that marching was done
For him who had joined in that game overseas
Where Death stood to win, though his name was to borrow
A brightness therefrom not to fade on the morrow."

Mr. Hardy's world is, one feels, half peopled with "false ones" and "quick comers," misty impersonal beings who are sent into the world to bring home to us the purposes of an ironic destiny.

He is laboriously light handed, and recalls the woodcut illustrations, in magazines, of his early novels, in "Timing Her" (written to an old folk-tune):

"Near is she now, O,
Now, O, now O;
Milk the rich cow, O,
Forward the tea;
Shake down the bed for her,
Linen sheets spread for her,
Drape round the head for her
Coming to me."

As laboriously ponderous he begins in "The Pedigree":

"I bent in the deep of night
Over a pedigree the chronicler gave
As mine; and as I bent there half-unrobed,
The uncurtained panes of my window-square let in the watery light
Of the moon in its old age;
And green-rheumed clouds were hurrying past where mute and cold it globed
Like a dying dolphin's eye seen through a lapping wave."

But it is impossible to do justice to Mr. Hardy by quotation, and difficult in criticism to pay the debt we all owe to him. His merit has always outrun even his renown; and of his immortality one can only ask in the words of his own "Afterwards":

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the people say
"He was a man who used to notice such things"?

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,
The dewfall hawk comes crossing the shades to alight
Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, will a gazer think,
"To him this must have been a familiar sight?"

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
Will they say, "He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,
But he could do little for them; and now he is gone"?

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at the last, they stand at the door,
Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
"He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
Till they rise again as they were a new bell's boom,
"He hears it not now, but used to notice such things."?

Of Mr. Hardy's followers in verse Mr. Siegfried Sassoon has already given evidence of very high technical skill. "Counter Attack" is a collection of his War poems written in the twelve months or so since his "Old Huntsman" was published, with the addition of "Thrushes," ten lines in which the War, happily, does not figure. It is arguable that the War has lowered the tone of Mr. Sassoon's poetry. He can get telling effects quite easily by clever writing, but in so doing forfeits the dignity with which one instinctively invests him. As a War poet he recalls Mr. Hardy's "Poems of the Past and Present," but he is able, of course, by his greater intimacy, to get further into his subject. However, one may approve his views. He is irresistibly clever in

DOES IT MATTER.

Does it matter?—losing your legs? . . . .
For people will always be kind;
And you need not show that you mind
When the others come in after hunting
To gobble their muffins and eggs.

Does it matter?—losing your sight? . . . . .
There's such splendid work for the blind;
And people will always be kind,
As you sit on the terrace remembering
And turning your face to the light.

* MOMENTS OF VISION AND MISCELLANEOUS VERSES. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan & Co., 1917.

COUNTER-ATTACK AND OTHER POEMS. By Siefgried Sassoon. Heinemann, 1918.

THE SHEEPFOLD. By Lawrence Housman. Duckworth & Co., 918.

...ing—and so is "The Return ... Native." ... Put I consider

murderous, given aspects bland or forbidding, loaded

...utting from The Church Qtly. Review of

...t. 1918

THE POETRY OF THOMAS HARDY.

Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses. By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan. 1917.) 7*s.* 6*d.* net.

Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan. 1916.) 3*s.* net.

IN 1898 Mr. Hardy published *Wessex Poems*, in 1902 *Poems of the Past and Present*, in 1904-8 came that mighty drama *The Dynasts*, in 1904 and 1914 *Time's Laughing-Stocks* and *Satires of Circumstance*. Now the veteran gives us *Moments of Vision* and will, we hope, still give us more. A year earlier Messrs. Macmillan added to their 'Golden Treasury' series an excellent selection of 120 poems (including some which appear in this last volume), an invitation to those who know not the master, and a thrice-welcome companion for the myriads who revere him.

The Woodlanders is perhaps the best of the novels: *The Well-beloved* is one of the happiest of all their happy titles, for it gives the key to the author's wide sway over hearts. 'I shall still read Anatole France and Thomas Hardy,' said Wilamowitz-Moellendorf when he despaired of the restoration of literary friendship after the war. What is the deepest impression left by these two last volumes? Surely this, that Thomas Hardy is such a lover of men.

> 'I lipp'd rough rhymes of chance not choice,
> I thought not what my words might be;
> There came into my ear a voice
> That turned a tenderer verse for me.'

And this voice comes not only from the one faint figure of that midsummer eve, but from all sorts of men women and children throughout the poems, from kings and squires and farmers with their wives, from the fat death-doomed ever-walking student, the lovers and mourners, enemies and friends, ladies and glass-stainers, labourers and soldiers; even from those 'primest fuglemen' of his own line 'fogged in far antiqueness

no way of knowing what his view was of the bearing of such documents as these upon the subjects which he studied from other standpoints.

The *obiter dicta* then are in some ways as valuable as the treatment of the main themes. Happily through the 'piety' of Dom Connolly the book is provided with an excellent General Index. The student who is wise will make his own notes and extracts in plenty from the book as he goes through it for his own orientation and guidance: but if he has failed to do this, he will be wise from time to time to consult the index in the hope that somewhere in the pages of the volume he will find an *obiter dictum* bearing on some question that concerns him.

Not content with this alone, Dom Connolly has provided also an index of the MSS cited. It is the last item in the volume: and if anyone wishes to be convinced of the width of Mr. Bishop's erudition, he need only run his eye over those four pages. The writer looked with interest in this list for Harl. MS 2961. He had a personal reason for doing so: for long ago, as a callow curate just infected with a zeal for liturgical study, he was making a tyro's effort to grapple with that MS. His helplessness brought him first some words of encouragement and help from the scholar who is now Cardinal Gasquet, and he has never forgotten the kindness. But a further help was also in store, in the form of a sheet of paper descriptive of the MS which the same kindness procured from Mr. Edmund Bishop. The sheet came to the top again not long ago. It had not been forgotten: and when a new occasion recently arose for working at the old notes on Harl. MS 2961 of a quarter of a century ago, there it still was.

The MS is the Leofric Collectar—that is, one of those monuments of early Breviary, of which Mr. Bishop knew much, though the knowledge is not revealed in this volume. The MS therefore does not appear in the list. But the little anecdote may serve as an illustration of what has been said above about Mr. Bishop's

past surmise and reason's reach ' of whom at last he learns himself to be ' mere continuator and counterfeit '—and yet, ' Love lures life on,' and this kind, simple heart finds something admirable in all its fellows and chastens us by tenderness. Well, he too has won the love of his readers, and something more, as he tells us in many a brave lyric :

> ' Whatever his message—glad or grim—
> Two bright-souled women clave to him ;
> Stand and say that while day decays,
> It will be word enough of praise.'

In poems as in novels he is very close to nature :

' When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the people say,
" He was a man who used to notice such things " ?

. . . . . .

' If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
Will they say, " He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,
But he could do little for them ; and now he is gone " ? '

The innocent creatures he partly understands. Behind and about them and himself is the enveloping mystery with which he has lived so continuously in his practical country life that he knows he can never really know it. It touches, interpenetrates, absorbs him, but at the centre there is something alien, something not yet to be trusted. Nature surrounds him as his fathers' worship does : the ultimate meaning of each is obscure. All the more he accepts the use and wont of each, kindly, reverently. Churches to this architect, choirs and the old village orchestras are dear to this son of the violinist. The cool failings of the country clergy he takes without blame, as a labourer would. Read ' The Choirmaster's Burial ' :

> ' We would with our lutes
> Play over him
> By his grave-brim
> The psalm he liked best—
> The one whose sense suits
> " Mount Ephraim "—
> And perhaps we should seem
> To him in Death's dream,
> Like the seraphim.'

But the Vicar said,

> 'That old-fashioned way
> Requires a fine day,
> And it seems to me
> It had better not be.'

So 'they buried the master without any tune,' and at dead of next night a ghostly band made up for all.

Those ghosts of Mr. Hardy's! Not fanciful, not blends of the mind with phenomena, too real—we would almost say, too sacred to discuss. These too have their substance in his love for men and for the 'innocent creatures' which, like men, suffer the mystery of life, and cheerfully play in it their unasked for, inevitable part. Read—you will scarcely do so without tears of remorse and thankfulness—'The Blinded Bird.'

Mr. Hardy's faith is indeed severe. It was, he says, a relief to him when he deemed it reasonable to suppose that the Immanent Will is unconscious. If that Will should ever open conscious eyes, 'How wilt thou bear thyself in thy surprise?' he asks:

> 'Wilt thou destroy, in one wild shock of shame,
> Thy whole high-heaving firmamental frame,
> Or patiently adjust, amend, and heal?'

'In tenebris' (with its motto, *Considerabam ad dexteram et videbam; et non erat qui cognosceret me. . . . Non est qui requirat animam meam*) is a confession that among 'the many and the strong' there is no place for one who cannot discern their vision:

> 'Let him in whose ears the low-voiced Best is killed by the clash of the First,
> Who holds that if way to the better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst,
> Who feels that delight is a delicate growth cramped by crookedness, custom, and fear,
> Get him up and begone as one shaped awry: he disturbs the order here.'

Let him stay and let him speak if he can speak with Thomas Hardy's charity. We need such a one to face the worst of truth. Without his pains we shall never reach the best of truth. And he perhaps will come with us. Certainly he will if he honestly can. The volume of selections ends with that chorus from *The Dynasts* in which hope is sung:

> 'Consciousness the Will informing, till It fashion all things fair!'

Would Mr. Hardy have allowed it that emphatic position if he did not incline to that side? We must not make too much of that sign. But in *Moments of Vision* there are others. When 'He wonders about himself' he asks a pregnant question:

> 'Part is mine of the general Will,
> Cannot my share in the sum of sources
> Bend a digit the poise of forces,
> And a fair desire fulfil?'

The war has called from him solemn notes which resound determiningly not determinedly. These allow us to put a meaning deeper than the first that offers itself on that tremendous oracle among the 'Poems of war and patriotism' which begins:

> 'I met a man when night was nigh
> Who said, with shining face and eye
> Like Moses' after Sinai:
>
> '"I have seen the Moulder of Monarchies,
> Realms, peoples, plains and hills,
> Sitting upon the sunlit seas!—
> And, as He sat, soliloquies
> Fell from Him like an antiphonic breeze
> That pricks the waves to thrills."'

And all through a light glimmers and gathers from 'The something that saved him,' when

> 'The clock rang;
> The hour brought a hand to deliver;
> I upsprang
> And looked back at den, ditch and river,
> And sang.'

What hand this was may be partly guessed from quotations already given. The constant reader will guess more precisely; then he will change his mind and be less ready to define. Whatever the deliverance, it has left its happy mark on three pages out of every four in these books. 'Life laughs onward' and 'the too regretful mood' is always dying on the poet's tongue. 'Mornings beryl-bespread, And evenings golden-red' return after the gray. 'Lalage's coming': there is no melancholy there. And yet, more grateful still to ears attuned is such a piece (so clever too in its echo of the lilt of the minuet) as the

wistfully gay 'Lines to a movement in Mozart's E-flat Symphony':

'Show me again the time
When in the June-tide's prime
We flew by meads and mountains northerly!—
Yea, to such freshness, fairness, fulness, fineness, freeness,
Love lures life on.

'Show me again the day
When from the sandy bay
We looked together upon the pestered sea!—
Yea, to such surging, swaying, sighing, swelling, shrinking,
Love lures life on.'

There is no room to quote the rest. This review is belated. The reviewer found at first that these poems were almost too tersely, masterfully carved—too naked, if the word may be allowed, for him. He shrank from writing, kept them in his pocket and at his bedside, and read and read. Now his trouble is that he wants to quote a hundred passages; so rare is the workmanship, so intimately do they speak. Here is just one more, the 'Student's Love-Song,' which seems to gather many characteristics of the poet into a tiny space:

'Once more the cauldron of the sun
Smears the bookcase with winy red,
And here my page is, and there my bed,
And the apple-tree shadows travel along.
Soon their intangible track will be run,
And dusk grow strong
And they be fled.

'Yes: now the boiling ball is gone.
And I have wasted another day . . .
But wasted—*wasted* do I say?
Is it a waste to have imaged one
Beyond the hills there, who, anon,
My great deeds done,
Will be mine alway?'

A. NAIRNE.

of the Native." But I consider Hardy's novels a part of his poetical achievement.' [quot. from N.Y. "Outlook"]

Parmi les sculptures et les objets d'art, une *Madone* en bronze de Peter Vischer a atteint 60.000 marks; une *Louve* en bronze de l'école de Padoue, 80.000; un *Neptune* de Sansovino, 71.500; un vase en bronze de Riccio, 68.000; un reliquaire carolingien, 97.000; une monstrance en émail de Limoges du XIIIe siècle, 64.000; deux tapisseries flamandes représentant *Danaé* et *L'Enlèvement d'Europe*, 81.000 et 68.000.

MEMENTO. — La revue *L'Art et les Artistes* vient de publier encore un nouveau numéro spécial consacré à *Venise avant et pendant la guerre* : M. Henri de Régnier et M. Robert Hénard y célèbrent la beauté de Venise et ses trésors d'art, tandis que M. P. Savé-Lopez y expose les mesures de précaution que nous avons dites (1), prises pour protéger ces richesses, et 70 gravures mettent sous les yeux du lecteur des vues des édifices et des principaux chefs-d'œuvre de la cité des Doges ainsi que les travaux entrepris pour les sauvegarder.

A signaler encore dans les derniers numéros du *Cousin Pons* : le 15 novembre, un juste plaidoyer de M. Arsène Alexandre en faveur de nos musées de province, dont on ignore ou méconnaît trop souvent les richesses (3 ill., parmi lesquelles la reproduction d'un buste de femme de la première manière de Rodin, conservé au Musée de Rennes), — et, le 1er février, un article de M. Raymond Bouyer sur le Musée des Arts décoratifs à propos de la réouverture récente de ses salles (3 ill.).

AUGUSTE MARGUILLIER.

LETTRES ANGLAISES

Moments of Vision, par Thomas Hardy (Macmillan 6s). — Les *Moments of Vision* sont l'œuvre d'un homme parvenu au déclin de la vie. Il voit son existence se dérouler dans le passé; il sent l'heure venir où sa personnalité va se noyer dans la communion éternelle des choses. Son activité se réduit à se souvenir et à comprendre; mais dans cette demi-passivité crépusculaire, quelle envolée de vision, quelle émotion concentrée, quelles profondeurs psychologiques, que ne troublent plus les passions éphémères!

Aux yeux de Thomas Hardy, le monde a cessé d'être un conflit, c'est une unité dont les manifestations diverses : naturelles, instinctives et intellectuelles, « eternal artistries in circumstance », s'entrelacent et s'unissent pour créer de nouvelles formes de plus en plus conscientes, de plus en plus belles et harmonieuses. Dans les *Dynasts* le poète avait déjà exposé cette philosophie, et à la fin du drame, le chœur des esprits annonce l'arrivée :

Consciousness, the Will informing, till it fashions all things fair.

A cette œuvre d'art suprême, l'individu contribue, et si parfois Thomas Hardy en doute et se demande pourquoi, puisque une partie

(1) V. *Mercure de France*, 1er janvier 1918, p. 145-146.

Autrichiens se résigneront à cette nouvelle mainmise de l'Allemagne comme ils se sont résignés à beaucoup d'autres et pourront peut-être se consoler en se rappelant l'aventure de la *Flore* du sculpteur anglais Lucas baptisée par M. Bode œuvre de Léonard de Vinci et en se disant, par suite que le Titien qui leur échappe n'est peut-être, de même que la variante du musée de Madrid, qu'une œuvre d'atelier, promue à la dignité d'œuvre originale par la volonté dictatoriale de M. Bode qui prétend, mais sans preuves, y reconnaître une *Vénus* de Titien ayant d'abord appartenu à l'évêque d'Arras Granvelle, fils du chancelier de Charles-Quint, puis vendue à l'empereur Rodolphe II et disparue depuis le sac de Prague par les Suédois en 1648 (1). Le critique de la *Strassburger Post* (2) avoue qu'on ne saurait, en tout cas, « la compter parmi les chefs-d'œuvre du maître ».

Avec cette toile le musée expose ses autres acquisitions récentes, parmi lesquelles une *Lucrèce* de Cranach le Vieux provenant de la collection du peintre Ludwig Knaus, puis trois tableaux ayant fait partie de la collection Richard von Kaufmann dont nous allons parler : une *Crucifixion* d'un peintre de Bohême des environs de 1360, un *Portrait de jeune homme* par Hans von Kulmbach, et une *Madone* d'un peintre flamand du XVe siècle apparenté au « Maître de Flémalle ».

Cette **collection Richard von Kaufmann**, célèbre par ses nombreuses et importantes œuvres de Primitifs dont plusieurs furent admirées aux Expositions des Primitifs flamands à Bruges en 1902 et des Primitifs français à Paris en 1904, a été dispersée à Berlin en décembre dernier, à la suite de la mort de son propriétaire. La vente des tableaux a produit 8 millions de marks; celle des sculptures et objets d'art, 4 millions de marks, soit, au total, 16 millions de francs. Le Musée de Francfort s'est fait adjuger un *Ecce Homo* de Jérôme Bosch dont une copie existe au Rijksmuseum d'Amsterdam; le Musée germanique de Nuremberg, un *Portement de croix* attribué à Hans Schuchling, et la Pinacothèque de Munich a acquis pour 310.000 marks le *Pays de cocagne* de Breughel le Vieux. La *Résurrection de Lazare* de notre Nicolas Froment d'Avignon a été acquise pour 300.000 marks par le comte Castiglione, de Vienne. Citons encore : un portrait d'homme par Rogier van der Weyden, vendu 340.000 marks ; un *Baptême du Christ*, par le maître allemand dit « de *Saint Barthélemy* », 230.000; un portrait de Luther avec sa femme Catherine von Borg, 104.000; un portrait d'homme par le Tintoret, 230.000; un autre par Moretto de Brescia, 200.000; une *Judith* de Botticelli, 110.000, et une *Madone* du même, 78.000.

(1) *Tægliche Rundschau*, 12 février 1918.
(2) N° du 19 janvier.

de la Volonté générale est sienne, il ne peut déranger d'un pouce l'équilibre des forces pour réaliser son désir, sa désespérance n'est que passagère et c'est dans leur éternité qu'il mesure la vision d'une pensée, d'un acte, d'un baiser même :

That Kiss is gone where none can tell
Not even those who felt its spell
It cannot have died, that know we well.
Somewhere it pursues its flight,
One of a long procession of sounds
Travelling aethereal rounds
Far from earth's bounds
In the infinite.

La même idée se retrouve dans les vers : *In a Museum*. Puisque tout ce qui existe se prolonge à jamais, Le Temps n'est qu'un rêve :

Such a dream is Time, that the coo of this ancient bird
Has perished not, but is blent or will be blending
Mid visionless wilds of space with the voice that I heard
In the full-fugued song of the universe unending.

Tous les détails contenus dans une œuvre de Hardy empruntent à cette conception une grandeur qui se répercute à l'infini.

On a traité de pessimiste l'auteur de *Moments of Vision* et l'on peut sans doute appuyer cette opinion sur certain passage du poème intitulé *Fragment*. Le poète entre dans une longue galerie semblable aux catacombes ; il y trouve étendu de chaque côté des corps d'hommes immobiles et qui pourtant ne sont pas morts, et il leur demande ce qui va se passer : « Ils attendent, répondent-ils, que Dieu sache... » — « Qu'il sache quoi ? » — « Qu'il sache comment ont marché les choses sur terre et sous terre. Il est clair qu'un jour il devra le savoir. » — « Pourquoi ? » — « Puisqu'il nous a faits les humbles pionniers de Lui-même dans la conscience des larmes de la vie, il n'est pas besoin d'être grand prophète pour dire que ce qu'il peut montrer inconsciemment à ses créatures, il le saura lui-même. Par quelque mystère non dévoilé nous avons atteint la sensation avant lui, mais il nous rattrapera bientôt si le monde continue... »

Ce Dieu, ce n'est ni la Volonté, ni la Force, ni la Loi, ni la Cause ultime : c'est la conscience universelle qui se fait jour. Malgré la note ironique qui termine le récit, c'est bien là ce que Hardy, le disciple de Schopenhauer, a toujours cru. Un tel mystère n'est point l'élaboration d'un pessimiste qui s'arrête à la laideur d'un geste, à la mesquinerie de l'intention immédiate sans chercher sous les apparences une explication générale. Thomas Hardy a foi aux forces spirituelles dans le sens le plus large du mot. Il possède :

The visioning powers of souls who dare
To pierce the material screen.

Les trois voix qui l'inspirent, ses muses, pourrait-on dire, sont l'Immortalité, la Pitié et l'Ironie. Dans les *Dynasts*, il les a personnifiées et elles commentent les événements qui se passent sur terre. Chacune exprime l'un des aspects sous lesquels le poète contemple la vie. Leurs discussions sont les débats silencieux de son âme, leurs jugements les sentences de son intellect. Si, dans *Moments of Vision*, elles ne sont point nommées, on retrouve leurs accents. L'ironie parle dans *O my pretty pink frock ; At Madame Tussaud's in Victorian Years, The Dolls ;* la pitié dans *The Blinded Bird, Imagining, The Choirmaster's Burial ;* mais la muse des années domine, on l'entend toujours, et les poèmes où elle règne souveraine sont de purs chefs-d'œuvre. Jamais poète n'a prononcé avec tant d'intensité réfléchie les adieux définitifs, jamais personne n'a raconté en mots plus simples et plus poignants les pensées avant-coureuses de la mort : images de jours d'autrefois où l'être plein d'enthousiasme et de vitalité vibrait de joie, souvenances douces d'heures calmes, d'amitiés échangées, de regards sans amertume. Puis, l'automne de la vie s'annonce et le vide se fait en soi et autour de soi, les tombes fraîchement creusées augmentent au cimetière et bientôt la compagne de tous les instants disparaît à son tour. L'âme se détache de tout et ne se demande plus qu'avec curiosité ce que les gens diront quand elle sera partie et s'ils se souviendront... Hardy a voulu que les *Moments of Vision* aient la mélancolie triste d'un glas, mais il les a revêtus d'une telle magnificence d'émotion que ce sont les chants d'une immortalité triomphante.

HENRY-D. DAVRAY.

OUVRAGES SUR LA GUERRE ACTUELLE

Louis Barthou : *Sur les Routes du Droit*, Bloud et Gay, s. p. — Comte de [illegible] : *L'Entente et le problème autrichien*, Bernard Grasset, 3.50. — *La Barbarie allemande*, Plon-Nourrit, 3.50. — Anton Nystrœm : *Avant 1914, Pendant et après*, Paris, Payot, 7 fr. 50. — Jules Hoche : *En Alsace reconquise* ; Paris, Albin Michel, 3 fr. 50. — Capitaine Z. : *L'Officier et le soldat français*, Nouv. libr. nationale, in-18. — A. Rousseau : *Trois ans de guerre. Notre marine et la lutte*, Alcan, 1 fr. — Jean-Bernard : *Histoire générale et anecdotique de la guerre de 1914*, tome I, Berger-Levrault, 6 fr. — James M. Beck : *La Guerre et l'Humanité* (traduction A. Cohn), Payot, 4 fr. — André Fribourg : *Croire, histoire d'un soldat*, Payot, 4 fr. — Gaston Jollivet : *Cinq mois de guerre*, Hachette, 3 fr. 50. — Anonyme : *Amis de la France*, Plon, 3 fr. 50. — Jacques Mortane : *Chambres de Boches*, l'Édition Française illustrée, 30, rue de Provence, 3 fr. 50.

Tout le monde connaît et honore infiniment certains deuils privés advenus durant cette Guerre. Je prie donc que l'on voie dans les lignes qui suivent seulement des opinions exprimées à l'occasion d'un livre, sans nulle application personnelle.

MR. HARDY'S LYRICAL POEMS

1. **Wessex Poems and Other Verses.** Harper & Brothers. 1898.
2. **Poems of the Past and the Present.** Harper & Brothers. 1902.
3. **The Dynasts. A Drama of the Napoleonic Wars.** In three Parts. Macmillan. 1904-1908.
4. **Time's Laughingstocks and Other Verses.** Macmillan. 1909.
5. **Satires of Circumstance. Lyrics and Reviews.** Macmillan. 1914.
6. **Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses.** Macmillan. 1918.
7. **Selected Poems of Thomas Hardy** (Golden Treasury Series). Macmillan. 1916.

WHEN, about Christmas time in 1898, Mr. Hardy's admirers, who were expecting from him a new novel, received instead a thick volume of verse, there was mingled with their sympathy and respect a little disappointment and a great failure in apprehension. Those who were not rude enough to suggest that a cobbler should stick to his last, reminded one another that many novelists had sought relaxation by trifling with the Muses. Thackeray had published 'Ballads,' and George Eliot had expatiated in a 'Legend of Jubal.' No one thought the worse of 'Coningsby' because its author had produced a 'Revolutionary Epic.' It took some time for even intelligent criticism to see that the new 'Wessex Poems' did not fall into this accidental category, and still, after twenty years, there survives a tendency to take the verse of Mr. Hardy, abundant and solid as it has become, as a mere subsidiary and ornamental appendage to his novels. It is still necessary to insist on the complete independence of his career as a poet, and to point out that if he had never published a page of prose he would deserve to rank high among the writers of his country on the score of the eight volumes of his verse. It is as a lyrical poet, and solely as a lyrical poet, that we propose to speak of him to-day.

It has been thought extraordinary that Cowper was over fifty when he published his first secular verses, but Mr. Hardy

animals and plants we know relatively much; of the heredity of the human family certainly very little. Yet without this knowledge we cannot expect to investigate the problem of human personality or of human origins with any success; nor, until we have that knowledge, can we demand or expect to add or substitute a strictly scientific proof to the religious doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

It is conceivable that that proof may eventually be given with the certitude and precision of a mathematical demonstration. If, as is probable, our still infant science remains for long baffled by its ignorance of what are as yet impenetrable mysteries—among which the question of human immortality, so considerable an issue to one small species on one small planet in one of the minor solar systems, is by no means necessarily the gravest or most difficult problem to be faced—we have still the robust conviction that this life, with all its evils, is for most people well worth living for itself, and perhaps not least worth living to those who occupy themselves with these enquiries. And if, as may be, the progress of science should in the end confirm the longing for survival after death, it would place the faith of many on a securer basis than now seems possible for man to hold; while it might in time—although of this prospect one cannot but be far more doubtful—even restore some measure of conviction to those recent theologians who find the New Testament at best an unsatisfactory collection of documents, and who, having now abolished hell as well as purgatory,* will probably proceed to investigate the promise of paradise with equally devastating results. If it should ever indeed be the fate of science to revitalize our fainting theologians with the first principles they have now tremblingly abandoned, the outraged shade of Galileo might perhaps smile ironically at the poetic justice of the revenge.

A. WYATT TILBY.

* 'The New Testament is ambiguous and not always consistent. It does not always give us all we want. . . . It is probably safe to say that except in a few restricted circles a living belief in hell has practically vanished to-day in the Church of England.'—The Rev. C. W. Emmett, in the series of essays edited by Canon Streeter on 'Immortality.' One had not realized before that hell, like parliamentary government, depended on a democratic majority.

was approaching his sixtieth year when he sent 'Wessex 'Poems' to the press. Such self-restraint—'none hath by 'more studious ways endeavoured, and with more unwearied 'spirit none shall'—has always fascinated the genuine artist, but few have practised it with so much tenacity. When the work of Mr. Hardy is completed, nothing, it is probable, will more strike posterity than its unity, its consistency. He has given proof, as scarce any other modern writer has done, of tireless constancy of resolve. His novels formed an unbroken series from the 'Desperate Remedies' of 1871 to 'The Well-Beloved' of 1897. In the fullness of his success, and unseduced by all temptation, he closed that chapter of his career, and has kept it closed. Since 1898 he has been, persistently and periodically, a poet and nothing else. That he determined, for reasons best left to his own judgment, to defer the exhibition of his verse until he had completed his work in prose, ought not to prejudice criticism in its analysis of the lyrics and the colossal dramatic panorama. Mr. Hardy, exclusively as a poet, demands our undivided attention.

It is legitimate to speculate on other probable causes of Mr. Hardy's delay. From such information as lies scattered before us, we gather that it was from 1865 to 1867 that he originally took poetry to be his vocation. The dated pieces in the volume of 1898 help us to form an idea of the original character of his utterance. On the whole it was very much what it remains in the pieces composed after a lapse of half a century. Already, as a very young man, Mr. Hardy possessed his extraordinary insight into the movements of human character, and his eloquence in translating what he had observed of the tragedy and pain of rustic lives. No one, for sixty years, had taken so closely to heart the admonitions of Wordsworth in his famous Preface to the 1800 edition of 'Lyrical Ballads' to seek for inspiration in that condition where 'the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful 'forms of nature.' But it may well be doubted whether his poems would have been received in the mid-Victorian age with favour, or even have been comprehended. Fifty years ahead of his time, Mr. Hardy was asking in 1866 for novelty of ideas, and he must have been conscious that his questioning would seem inopportune. He needed a different atmosphere, and he left the task of revolt to another, and, at first sight, a

very unrelated force, that of the 'Poems and Ballads' of the same year. But Swinburne succeeded in his revolution, and although he approached the art from an opposite direction, he prepared the way for an ultimate appreciation of Mr. Hardy.

We should therefore regard the latter, in spite of his silence of forty years, as a poet who laboured, like Swinburne, at a revolution against the optimism and superficial sweetness of his age. Swinburne, it is true, tended to accentuate the poetic side of poetry, while Mr. Hardy drew verse, in some verbal respects, nearer to prose. This does not affect their common attitude, and the sympathy of these great artists for one another's work has already been revealed, and will be still more clearly exposed. But they were unknown to each other in 1866, when to both of them the cheap philosophy of the moment, the glittering femininity of the 'jewelled line,' the intense respect for Mrs. Grundy in her Sunday satin, appeared trumpery, hateful, and to be trampled upon. We find in Mr. Hardy's earliest verse no echo of the passionate belief in personal immortality which was professed by Ruskin and Browning. He opposed the Victorian theory of human 'progress'; the Tennysonian beatific Vision seemed to him ridiculous. He rejected the idea of the sympathy and goodness of Nature, and was in revolt against the self-centredness of the Romantics. We may conjecture that he combined a great reverence for 'The Book of Job' with a considerable contempt for 'In Memoriam.'

This was not a mere rebellious fancy which passed off; it was something inherent that remained, and gives to-day their peculiar character to Mr. Hardy's latest lyrics. But before we examine the features of this personal mode of interpreting poetry to the world, we may collect what little light we can on the historic development of it. In the pieces dated between 1865 and 1867 we find the germ of almost everything which has since characterized the poet. In 'Amabel' the ruinous passage of years, which has continued to be an obsession with Mr. Hardy, is already crudely dealt with. The habit of taking poetical negatives of small scenes —'your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree, and a pond 'edged with grayish leaves' ('Neutral Tones')—which had not

existed in English verse since the days of Crabbe, reappears. There is marked already a sense of terror and resentment against the blind motions of chance—in 'Hap' the author would positively welcome a certainty of divine hatred as a relief from the strain of depending upon 'crass casualty.' Here and there in these earliest pieces an extreme difficulty of utterance is remarkable in the face of the ease which the poet attained afterwards in the expression of his most strange images and fantastic revelations. We read in 'At a Bridal':

> 'Should I, too, wed as slave to Mode's decree,
> And each thus found apart, of false desire,
> A stolid line, whom no high aims will fire
> As had fired ours could ever have mingled we!'

This, although perfectly reducible, takes time to think out, and at a hasty glance seems muffled up in obscurity beyond the darkness of Donne; moreover, it is scarcely worthy in form of the virtuoso which Mr. Hardy was presently to become. Perhaps of the poems certainly attributable to this earliest period, the little cycle of sonnets called 'She to Him' gives clearest promise of what was coming. The sentiment is that of Ronsard's famous 'Quand vous serez bien vieille, au soir, à la chandelle,' but turned round, as Mr. Hardy loves to do, from the man to the woman, and embroidered with ingenuities, such as where the latter says that as her temperament dies down the habit of loving will remain, and she be

> 'Numb as a vane that cankers on its point,
> True to the wind that kissed ere canker came,'

which attest a complexity of mind that Ronsard's society knew nothing of.

On the whole, we may perhaps be safe in conjecturing that, whatever the cause, the definite dedication to verse was now postponed. Meanwhile, the writing of novels had become the business of Mr. Hardy's life, and ten years go by before we trace a poet in that life again. But it is interesting to find that when the great success of 'Far from the Madding Crowd' had introduced him to a circle of the best readers, there followed an effect which again disturbed his ambition

for the moment. Mr. Hardy was once more tempted to change the form of his work. He wished 'to get back to verse,' but was dissuaded by Leslie Stephen, who induced him to start writing 'The Return of the Native' instead. On the 29th of March, 1875, Coventry Patmore, then a complete stranger, wrote to express his regret that 'such almost 'unequalled beauty and power as appeared in the novels 'should not have assured themselves the immortality which 'would have been conferred upon them by the form of verse.' This was just at the moment when we find Mr. Hardy's conversations with 'long Leslie Stephen in the velveteen coat' obstinately turning upon 'theologies decayed and defunct, 'the origin of things, the constitution of matter, and the 'unreality of time.' To this period belongs also the earliest conception of 'The Dynasts,' an old note-book containing, under the date June 20th, 1875, the suggestion that the author should attempt 'An Iliad of Europe from 1789 to 1815.'

To this time also seems to belong the execution of what has proved the most attractive section of Mr. Hardy's poetry, the narratives, or short Wessex ballads. The method in which these came into the world is very curious. Many of these stories were jotted down to the extent of a stanza or two when the subject first occurred to the author. For instance, 'The 'Fire at Tranter Sweatley's,' first published by Lionel Johnson in 1894, had been begun as early as 1867, and was finished ten years later. The long ballad of 'Leipzig' and the savage 'San Sebastian,' both highly characteristic, were also conceived and a few lines of each noted down long before their completion. 'Valenciennes,' however, belongs to 1878, and the 'Dance at 'the Phœnix,' of which the stanza beginning ''Twas Christmas' alone had been written years before, seems to have been finished about the same time. What evidence is before us goes to prove that in the 'seventies Mr. Hardy became a complete master of the art of verse, and that his poetic style was by this time fixed. He still kept poetry out of public sight, but he wrote during the next twenty years, as though in a backwater off the stream of his novels, the poems which form the greater part of the volume of 1898. If no other collection of his lyrical verse existed, we should miss a multitude of fine things, but our general conception of his genius would be little modified.

We should judge carelessly, however, if we treated the subsequent volumes as mere repetitions of the original 'Wessex 'Poems.' They present interesting differences, which we may rapidly note before we touch on the features which characterize the whole body of Mr. Hardy's verse. 'Poems of 'the Past and Present,' which came out in the first days of 1902, could not but be in a certain measure disappointing, in so far as it paralleled its three years' product with that of the thirty years of 'Wessex Poems.' Old pieces were published in it, and it was obvious that in 1898 Mr. Hardy might be expected to have chosen from what used to be called his 'portfolio' those specimens which he thought to be most attractive. But on further inspection this did not prove to be quite the case. After pondering for twelve years on the era of Napoleon, his preoccupation began in 1887 to drive him into song:

> 'Must I pipe a palinody,
> Or be silent thereupon?'

He decides that silence has become impossible:

> 'Nay; I'll sing "The Bridge of Lodi"—
> That long-loved, romantic thing,
> Though none show by smile or nod, he
> Guesses why and what I sing!'

Here is the germ of 'The Dynasts.' But in the meantime the crisis of the Boer War had cut across the poet's dream of Europe a hundred years ago, and a group of records of the Dorsetshire elements of the British army at the close of 1899 showed us in Mr. Hardy's poetry what had not been suspected there—a military talent of a most remarkable kind. Another set of pieces composed in Rome were not so interesting; Mr. Hardy always seems a little languid when he leaves the confines of his native Wessex. Another section of 'Poems of 'the Past and Present' is severely, almost didactically, metaphysical, and expands in varied language the daring thought, so constantly present in Mr. Hardy's reverie, that God Himself has forgotten the existence of earth, this 'tiny sphere,' this 'tainted ball,' 'so poor a thing,' and has left all human life to be the plaything of blind chance. This sad conviction

is hardly ruffled by 'The Darkling Thrush,' which goes as far towards optimism as Mr. Hardy can let himself be drawn, or by such reflections as those in 'On a Fine Morning':

> 'Whence comes Solace? Not from seeing
> What is doing, suffering, being;
> Not from noting Life's conditions,
> Not from heeding Time's monitions;
> But in cleaving to the Dream,
> And in gazing on the gleam
> Whereby gray things golden seem.'

Eight years more passed, years marked by the stupendous effort of 'The Dynasts,' before Mr. Hardy put forth another collection of lyrical poems. 'Time's Laughingstocks' confirmed, and more than confirmed, the high promise of 'Wessex Poems.' The author, in one of his modest prefaces, where he seems to whisper while we bend forward in our anxiety not to miss one thrifty sentence, expresses the hope that 'Time's Laughingstocks' will, as a whole, take the 'reader forward, even if not far, rather than backward.' The book, indeed, does not take us 'far' forward, simply because the writer's style and scope were definitely exposed to us already, and yet it does take us 'forward,' because the hand of the master is conspicuously firmer and his touch more daring. The 'Laughingstocks' themselves are fifteen in number, tragical stories of division and isolation, of failures in passion, of the treason of physical decay. No landscape of Mr. Hardy's had been more vivid than the night-pictures in 'The Revisitation,' where the old soldier in barracks creeps out on to the gaunt down, and meets (by one of Mr. Hardy's coincidences) his ancient mistress, and no picture more terrible than the revelation of each to the other in the blaze of sunrise. What a document for the future is 'Reminiscences of a Dancing Man'? If only Shakespeare could have left us such a song of the London of 1585! But the power of the poet culminates in the pathos of 'The Tramp Woman'—perhaps the greatest of all Mr. Hardy's lyrical poems—and in the horror of 'A Sunday Morning's Tragedy.'

It is noticeable that 'Time's Laughingstocks' is, in some respects, a more daring collection than its predecessors. We find the poet here entirely emancipated from convention,

and guided both in religion and morals exclusively by the inner light of his reflection. His energy now interacts on his clairvoyance with a completeness which he had never quite displayed before, and it is here that we find Mr. Hardy's utterance peculiarly a quintessence of himself. Especially in the narrative pieces—which are often Wessex novels distilled into a wine-glass, such as 'Rose-Ann' and 'The Vampirine Fair'—he allows no considerations of what the reader may think 'nice' or 'pleasant' to shackle his sincerity or his determination; and it is therefore to 'Time's Laughingstocks' that the reader who wishes to become intimately acquainted with Mr. Hardy as a moralist most frequently recurs. We notice here more than elsewhere in his poems Mr. Hardy's sympathy with the local music of Wessex, and especially with its expression by the village choir, which he uses as a spiritual symbol. Quite a large section of 'Time's Laughingstocks' takes us to the old-fashioned gallery of some church, where the minstrels are bowing 'New Sabbath' or 'Mount 'Ephraim,' or to a later scene where the ghosts, in whose melancholy apparition Mr. Hardy takes such pleasure, chant their goblin melodies and strum 'the viols of the dead' in the moonlit churchyard. The very essence of Mr. Hardy's reverie at this moment of his career is to be found, for instance, in 'The Dead Quire,' where the ancient phantom-minstrels revenge themselves on their gross grandsons outside the alehouse.

Almost immediately after the outbreak of the present war Mr. Hardy presented to a somewhat distraught and inattentive public another collection of his poems. It cannot be said that 'Satires of Circumstance' is the most satisfactory of those volumes; it is, perhaps, that which we could with the least discomposure persuade ourselves to overlook. Such a statement refers more to the high quality of other pages than to any positive decay of power or finish here. There is no less adroitness of touch and penetration of view in this book than elsewhere, and the poet awakens once more our admiration by his skill in giving poetic value to minute conditions of life which have escaped less careful observers. But in 'Satires 'of Circumstance' the ugliness of experience is more accentuated than it is elsewhere, and is flung in our face with less compunction. The pieces which give name to the volume are

only fifteen in number, but the spirit which inspires them is very frequently repeated in other parts of the collection. That spirit is one of mocking sarcasm, and it acts in every case by presenting a beautifully draped figure of illusion, from which the poet, like a sardonic showman, twitches away the robe that he may display a skeleton beneath it.

We can with little danger assume, as we read the 'Satires of 'Circumstance,' hard and cruel shafts of searchlight as they seem, that Mr. Hardy was passing through a mental crisis when he wrote them. This seems to be the 'Troilus and 'Cressida' of his life's work, the book in which he is revealed most distracted by conjecture and most overwhelmed by the miscarriage of everything. The wells of human hope have been poisoned for him by some condition of which we know nothing, and even the picturesque features of Dorsetshire landscape, that have always before dispersed his melancholy, fail to win his attention:

'Bright yellowhammers
Made mirthful clamours,
And billed long straws with a bustling air,
And bearing their load,
Flew up the road
That he followed alone, without interest there.'

The strongest of the poems of disillusion which are the outcome of this mood is 'The Newcomer's Wife,' with the terrible abruptness of its last stanza. It is not for criticism to find fault with the theme of a work of art, but only to comment upon its execution. Of the merit of these monotonously sinister 'Satires of Circumstance' there can be no question; whether the poet's indulgence in the mood which gave birth to them does not tend to lower our moral temperature and to lessen the rebound of our energy is another matter. At all events, every one must welcome a postscript in which a blast on the bugle of war seemed to have wakened the poet from his dark brooding to the sense of a new chapter in history.

In the fourth year of the war the veteran poet has published 'Moments of Vision.' These show a remarkable recovery of spirit, and an ingenuity never before excelled. With the passage of years Mr. Hardy, observing everything in the little world of Wessex, and forgetting nothing, has become almost

preternaturally wise, and, if it may be said so, 'knowing,' with a sort of magic, like that of a wizard. He has learned to track the windings of the human heart with the familiarity of a gamekeeper who finds plenty of vermin in the woods, and who nails what he finds, be it stoat or squirrel, to the barn-door of his poetry. But there is also in these last-fruits of Mr. Hardy's mossed tree much that is wholly detached from the bitterness of satire, much that simply records, with an infinite delicacy of pathos, little incidents of the personal life of long ago, bestowing the immortality of art on these fugitive fancies in the spirit of the Japanese sculptor when he chisels the melting of a cloud or the flight of an insect on his sword-hilt:

'I idly cut a parsley stalk
And blew therein towards the moon;
I had not thought what ghosts would walk
With shivering footsteps to my tune.

'I went and knelt, and scooped my hand
As if to drink, into the brook,
And a faint figure seemed to stand
Above me, with the bye-gone look.

'I lipped rough rhymes of chance, not choice,
I thought not what my words might be;
There came into my ear a voice
That turned a tenderer verse for me.'

We have now in brief historic survey marshalled before us the various volumes in which Mr. Hardy's lyrical poetry was originally collected. Before we examine its general character more closely, it may be well to call attention to its technical quality, which was singularly misunderstood at first, and which has never, we believe, been boldly faced. In 1898, and later, when a melodious *falsetto* was much in fashion amongst us, the reviewers found great fault with Mr. Hardy's prosody; they judged him as a versifier to be rude and incorrect. As regards the single line, it may be confessed that Mr. Hardy, in his anxiety to present his thought in an undiluted form, is not infrequently clogged and hard. Such a line as

'Fused from its separateness by ecstacy'

hisses at us like a snake, and crawls like a wounded one. Mr. Hardy is apt to clog his lines with consonants, and he seems indifferent to the stiffness which is the consequence of this neglect. Ben Jonson said that 'Donne, for not keeping of 'accent, deserved hanging'; perhaps we may go so far as to say that Mr. Hardy, for his indifference to a mellifluous run lays himself open to a mild rebuke. He is negligent of that eternal ornament of English verse, audible intricacy, probably because of Swinburne's abuse of it. But most of what is called his harshness should rather be called bareness, and is the result of a revolt, conscious or unconscious, against Keats' prescription of 'loading the rifts with ore.'

In saying this we have said all that an enemy could in justice say in blame of his metrical peculiarities. Unquestionably he does occasionally, like Robert Browning, err in the direction of cacophony. But when we turn to the broader part of prosody we must perceive that Mr. Hardy is not only a very ingenious, but a very correct and admirable, metricist. His stanzaic invention is abundant; no other Victorian poet, not even Swinburne, has employed so many forms, mostly of his own invention, and employed them so appropriately, that is to say, in so close harmony with the subject or story enshrined in them. To take an example from his pure lyrics of reflection first, from 'The Bullfinches':

> 'Brother Bulleys, let us sing
> From the dawn till evening!
> For we know not that we go not
> When the day's pale ~~visions~~ fold *pinions?*
> Unto those who sang of old.'

In the exquisite fineness and sadness of the stanza we seem to hear the very voices of the birds warbling faintly in the sunset. Again, the hurried, timid irresolution of a lover always too late is marvellously rendered in the form of 'Lizbie Browne':

> 'And Lizbie Browne,
> Who else had hair
> Bay-red as yours,
> Or flesh so fair
> Bred out of doors,
> Sweet Lizbie Browne?'

On the other hand, the fierceness of 'I said to Love' is interpreted in a stanza that suits the mood of denunciation, while 'Tess's Lament' wails in a metre which seems to rock like an ageing woman seated alone before the fire, with an infinite haunting sadness.

It is, however, in the narrative pieces, the little 'Wessex Tales,' that Mr. Hardy's metrical imagination is most triumphant. No two of these are identical in form, and for each he selects, or more often invents, a wholly appropriate stanza. He makes many experiments, one of the strongest being the introduction of rhymeless lines at regular intervals. Of this, 'Cicely' is an example which repays attention:

'And still sadly onward I followed,
That Highway the Icen
Which trails its pale riband down Wessex
O'er lynchet and lea.

'Along through the Stour-bordered Forum,
Where legions had wayfared,
And where the slow river up-glasses
Its green canopy';

and one still more remarkable is the enchanting 'Friends Beyond,' to which we shall presently recur. The drawling voice of a weary old campaigner is wonderfully rendered in the stanza of 'Valenciennes':

'Well: Heaven wi' its jasper halls
Is now the on'y town I care to be in . . .
Good Lord, if Nick should bomb the walls
As we did Valencieën!'

whereas for long Napoleonic stories like 'Leipzig' and 'The Peasant's Confession,' a ballad-measure which contemporaries such as Southey or Campbell might have used, is artfully chosen. In striking contrast we have the elaborate verse-form of 'The Souls of the Slain,' in which the throbbing stanza seems to dilate and withdraw like the very cloud of moth-like phantoms which it describes. It is difficult to follow out this theme without more frequent quotation than we have space for here, but the reader who pursues it carefully will not repeat the rumour that Mr. Hardy is a careless or

'incorrect' metricist. He is, on the contrary, a metrical artist of great accomplishment.

The conception of life revealed in his verses by this careful artist is one which displays very exactly the bent of his temperament. During the whole of his long career Mr. Hardy has not budged an inch from his original line of direction. He holds that, abandoned by God, treated with scorn by Nature, man lies helpless at the mercy of 'those purblind 'Doomsters,' accident, chance, and time, from whom he had to endure injury and insult from the cradle to the grave. This is stating the Hardy doctrine in its extreme form, but it is not stating it too strongly. This has been called his 'pessimism,' a phrase to which some admirers, unwilling to give things their true name, have objected. But, of course, Mr. Hardy is a pessimist, just as Browning is an optimist, just as white is not black, and day is not night. Our juggling with words in paradox is too often apt to disguise a want of decision in thought. Let us admit that Mr. Hardy's conception of the fatal forces which beleaguer human life is a 'pessimistic' one, or else words have no meaning.

Yet it is needful to define in what this pessimism consists. It is not the egotism of Byron or the morbid melancholy of Chateaubriand. It is directed towards an observation of others, not towards an analysis of self, and this gives it more philosophical importance, because although romantic peevishness is very common among modern poets, and although ennui inspires a multitude of sonnets, a deliberate and imaginative study of useless suffering in the world around us is rare indeed among the poets. It is particularly to be noted that Mr. Hardy, although one of the most profoundly tragic of all modern writers, is neither effeminate nor sickly. His melancholy could never have dictated the third stanza of Shelley's 'Lines written in Dejection in the Bay of Naples.' His pessimism is involuntary, forced from him by his experience and his constitution, and no analysis could give a better definition of what divides him from the petulant despair of a poet like Leopardi than the lines 'To Life':

'O life, with the sad scared face,
I weary of seeing thee,
And thy draggled cloak, and thy hobbling pace,
And thy too-forced pleasantry!

'I know what thou would'st tell
Of Death, Time, Destiny—
I have known it long, and know, too, well
What it all means for me.

'But canst thou not array
Thyself in rare disguise,
And feign like truth, for one mad day,
That Earth is Paradise?

'I'll tune me to the mood,
And mumm with thee till eve,
And maybe what as interlude
I feign, I shall believe!'

But the mumming goes no deeper than it does in the exquisite poem of 'The Darkling Thrush,' where the carolings of an aged bird, on a frosty evening, are so ecstatic that they waken a vague hope in the listener's mind that the thrush may possibly know of 'some blessed hope' of which the poet is 'unaware.' This is as far as Mr. Hardy ever gets on the blest Victorian pathway of satisfaction.

There are certain aspects in which it is not unnatural to see a parallel between Mr. Hardy and George Crabbe. Each is the spokesman of a district, each has a passion for the study of mankind, each has gained by long years of observation a profound knowledge of local human character, and each has plucked on the open moor, and wears in his coat, the hueless flower of disillusion. But there is a great distinction in the aim of the two poets. Crabbe, as he describes himself in 'The Parish Register,' was 'the true physician' who 'walks the foulest ward.' He was utilitarian in his morality; he exposed the pathos of tragedy by dwelling on the faults which led to it, forgetful of the fatality which in more consistent moments he acknowledged. Crabbe was realistic with a moral design, even in the 'Tales of the Hall,' where he made a gallant effort at last to arrive at a detachment of spirit. No such effort is needed by Mr. Hardy, who has none of the instinct of a preacher, and who considers moral improvement outside his responsibility. He admits, with his great French contemporary, that

'Tout désir est menteur, toute joie éphémère,
Toute liqueur au fond de la coupe est amère,'

but he is bent on discovering the cause of this devastation, and not disposed to waste time over its consequences. At the end he produces a panacea which neither Crabbe nor Byron dreamed of—resignation.

But the poet has not reached the end of his disillusion. He thinks to secure repose on the breast of Nature, the *alma mater* to whom Goethe and Wordsworth and Browning each in his own way turned, and were rewarded by consolation and refreshment. We should be prepared to find Mr. Hardy, with his remarkable aptitude for the perception of natural forms, easily consoled by the influences of landscape and the inanimate world. His range of vision is wide and extremely exact; he has the gift of reproducing before us scenes of various character with a vividness which is sometimes startling. But Mr. Hardy's disdain of sentimentality, and his vigorous analysis of the facts of life, render him insensible not indeed to the mystery nor to the beauty, but to the imagined sympathy, of Nature. He has no more confidence in the visible earth than in the invisible heavens, and neither here nor there is he able to persuade himself to discover a counsellor or a friend. In this connection we do well to follow the poet's train of thought in the lyric called 'In a Wood,' where he enters a copse dreaming that, in that realm of 'sylvan peace,' Nature would offer 'a soft release from man's unrest.' He immediately observes that the pine and the beech are struggling for existence, and trying to blight each other with dripping poison. He sees the ivy eager to strangle the elm, and the hawthorns choking the hollies. Even the poplars sulk and turn black under the shadow of a rival. In the end, filled with horror at all these crimes of Nature, the poet flees from the copse as from an accursed place, and he determines that life offers him no consolation except the company of those human beings who are as beleaguered as himself:

'Since, then, no grace I find
Taught me of trees,
Turn I back to my kind
Worthy as these.
There at least smiles abound,
There discourse trills around,
There, now and then, are found,
Life-loyalties.'

It is absurd, he decides, to love Nature, which has either no response to give, or answers in irony. Let us even avoid, as much as we can, deep concentration of thought upon the mysteries of Nature, lest we become demoralized by contemplating her negligence, her blindness, her implacability. We find here a violent reaction against the poetry of egotistic optimism which had ruled the romantic school in England for more than a hundred years, and we recognize a branch of Mr. Hardy's originality. He has lifted the veil of Isis, and he finds beneath it, not a benevolent mother of men, but the tomb of an illusion. One short lyric, 'Yell'ham-Wood's 'Story,' puts this, again with a sylvan setting, in its unflinching crudity:

'Coomb-Firtrees say that Life is a moan,
And Clyffe-hill Clump says "Yea!"
But Yell'ham says a thing of its own:
It's not, "Gray, gray,
Is Life alway!"
That Yell'ham says,
Nor that Life is for ends unknown.

'It says that Life would signify
A thwarted purposing:
That we come to live, and are called to die.
Yes, that's the thing
In fall, in spring,
That Yell'ham says:—
"Life offers—to deny!"'

It is therefore almost exclusively to the obscure history of those who suffer and stumble around him, victims of the universal disillusion, men and women 'come to live but called 'to die,' that Mr. Hardy dedicates his poetic function. 'Lizbie 'Browne' appeals to us as a typical instance of his rustic pathos, his direct and poignant tenderness, and if we compare it with such poems of Wordsworth's as 'Lucy Gray' or 'Alice Fell' we see that he starts by standing much closer to the level of the subject than his great predecessor does. Wordsworth is the benevolent philosopher sitting in a post-chaise or crossing the 'wide moor' in meditation. Mr. Hardy is the familiar neighbour, the shy mourner at the grave; his relation is a more intimate one: he is patient, humble, un-upbraiding.

achievement.' [quot. from N.Y. "Outlook"]

Sometimes, as in the remarkable colloquy called 'The Ruined 'Maid,' his sympathy is so close as to offer an absolute flout in the face to the system of Victorian morality. Mr. Hardy, indeed, is not concerned with sentimental morals, but with the primitive instincts of the soul, applauding them, or at least recording them with complacency, even when they outrage ethical tradition, as they do in the lyric narrative called 'A Wife and Another.' The stanzas 'To an Unborn 'Pauper Child' sum up what is sinister and what is genial in Mr. Hardy's attitude to the unambitious forms of life which he loves to contemplate.

His temperature is not always so low as it is in the class of poems to which we have just referred but his ultimate view is never more sanguine. He is pleased sometimes to act as the fiddler at a dance, surveying the hot-blooded couples, and urging them on by the lilt of his instrument, but he is always perfectly aware that they will have 'to pay high for 'their prancing' at the end of all. No instance of this is more remarkable than the poem called 'Julie-Jane,' a perfect example of Mr. Hardy's metrical ingenuity and skill, which begins thus:

'Sing; how 'a would sing!
How 'a would raise the tune
When we rode in the waggon from harvesting
By the light o' the moon!

'Dance; how 'a would dance!
If a fiddlestring did but sound
She would hold out her coats, give a slanting glance,
And go round and round.

'Laugh; how 'a would laugh!
Her peony lips would part
As if none such a place for a lover to quaff
At the deeps of a heart,'

and which then turns to the most plaintive and the most irreparable tragedy, woven, as a black design on to a background of gold, upon this basis of temperamental joyousness.

Alphonse Daudet once said that the great gift of Edmond

de Goncourt was to '*rendre l'irrendable*.' This is much more true of Mr. Hardy than it was of Goncourt, and more true than it is of any other English poet except Donne. There is absolutely no observation too minute, no flutter of reminiscence too faint, for Mr. Hardy to adopt as the subject of a metaphysical lyric, and his skill in this direction has grown upon him; it is nowhere so remarkable as in his latest volume, aptly termed 'Moments of Vision.' Everything in village life is grist to his mill; he seems to make no selection, and his field is modest to humility and yet practically boundless. We have a poem on the attitude of two people with nothing to do and no book to read, waiting in the parlour of an hotel for the rain to stop, a recollection after more than forty years. That the poet once dropped a pencil into the cranny of an old church where he was sketching inspires an elaborate lyric. The disappearance of a rotted summer-house, the look of a row of silver drops of fog condensed on the bar of a gate, the effect of candlelight years and years ago on a woman's neck and hair, the vision of a giant at a fair, led by a dwarf with a red string—such are amongst the subjects which awaken in Mr. Hardy thoughts which do often lie too deep for tears, and call for interpretation in verse. The skeleton of a lady's sunshade, picked up on Swanage Cliffs, the pages of a fly-blown Testament lying in a railway waiting-room, a journeying boy in a third-class carriage, with his ticket stuck in the band of his hat—such are among the themes which awake in Mr. Hardy's imagination reveries which are always wholly serious and usually deeply tragic.

Mr. Hardy's notation of human touches hitherto excluded from the realm of poetry is one of the most notable features of his originality. It marked his work from the beginning, as in the early ballad of 'The Widow,' where the sudden damping of the wooer's amatory ardour in consequence of his jealousy of the child is rendered with extraordinary refinement. The difficulty of course is to know when to stop. There is always a danger that a poet, in his search after the infinitely ingenious, may lapse into *amphigory*, into sheer absurdity and triviality, which Cowper, in spite of his elegant lightness, does not always escape. Wordsworth, more serious in his intent, fell headlong in parts of 'Peter Bell,' and in such ballads as 'Betty Foy.' Mr. Hardy, whatever the poverty of

his incident, commonly redeems it by the oddity of his observation; as in 'The Pedigree':

'I bent in the deep of night
Over a pedigree the chronicler gave
As mine; and as I bent there, half-unrobed,
The uncurtained panes of my window-square
Let in the watery light
Of the moon in its old age:
And green-rheumed clouds were hurrying past
Where mute and cold it globed
Like a dying dolphin's eye seen through a lapping wave.'

Mr. Hardy's love of strange experiences, and of adventures founded on a balance of conscience and instinct, is constantly exemplified in those ballads and verse-anecdotes which form the section of his poetry most appreciated by the general public. Among these, extraordinarily representative of the poet's habit of mind, is 'My Cicely,' a tale of the eighteenth century, where a man impetuously rides from London through Wessex to be present at the funeral of the wrong woman; as he returns, by a coincidence, he meets the right woman, whom he used to love, and is horrified at 'her liquor-fired face, 'her thick accents.' He determines that by an effort of will the dead woman (whom he never saw) shall remain, what she seemed during his wild ride, '*my* Cicely,' and the living woman be expunged from memory. A similar deliberate electing that the dream shall hold the place of the fact is the motive of 'The Well-Beloved.' The ghastly humour of 'The Curate's 'Kindness' is a sort of reverse action of the same mental subtlety. Misunderstanding takes a very prominent place in Mr. Hardy's irony of circumstance; as, almost too painfully, in 'The Rash Bride,' a hideous tale of suicide following on the duplicity of a tender and innocent widow.

The grandmother of Mr. Hardy was born in 1772, and survived until 1857. From her lips he heard many an obscure old legend of the life of Wessex in the eighteenth century. Was it she who told him the terrible Exmoor story of 'The 'Sacrilege'; the early tale of 'The Two Men,' which might be the skeleton-scenario for a whole elaborate novel; or that incomparable comedy in verse, 'The Fire at Tranter 'Sweatley's,' with its splendid human touch at the very end?

We suspect that it was; and perhaps at the same source he acquired his dangerous insight into the female heart, whether exquisitely feeble as in 'The Home-coming,' with its delicate and ironic surprise, or treacherous, as in the desolating ballad of 'Rose-Ann.' No one, in prose or verse, has expatiated more poignantly than Mr. Hardy on what our forefathers used to call 'cases of conscience.' He seems to have shared the experiences of souls to whom life was 'a wood before your doors, 'and a labyrinth within the wood, and locks and bars to every 'door within that labyrinth,' as Jeremy Taylor describes that of the anxious penitents who came to him to confession. The probably very early story of 'The Casterbridge Captains' is a delicate study in compunction, and a still more important example is 'The Alarm,' where the balance of conscience and instinct gives to what in coarser hands might seem the most trivial of actions a momentous character of tragedy.

This is one of Mr. Hardy's studies in military history, where he is almost always singularly happy. His portraits of the non-commissioned officer of the old service are as excellent in verse as they are in the prose of 'The Trumpet-Major' or 'The Melancholy Hussar.' The reader of the novels will not have to be reminded that 'Valenciennes' and the other ballads have their prose-parallel in Simon Burden's reminiscences of Minden. Mr. Hardy, with a great curiosity about the science of war and a close acquaintance with the mind of the common soldier, has pondered on the philosophy of fighting. 'The Man he Killed,' written in 1902, expresses the wonder of the rifleman who is called upon to shoot his brother-in-arms, although

> 'Had he and I but met,
> By some old ancient inn,
> We should have set us down to wet
> Right many a nipperkin.'

In this connection the 'Poems of War and Patriotism,' which form an important part of the volume of 1918, should be carefully examined by those who meditate on the tremendous problems of the moment.

A poet so profoundly absorbed in the study of life could not fail to speculate on the probabilities of immortality.

Here Mr. Hardy presents to us his habitual serenity in negation. He sees the beautiful human body 'lined by tool of time,' and he asks what becomes of it when its dissolution is complete. He sees no evidence of a conscious state after death, of what would have to be, in the case of aged or exhausted persons, a revival of spiritual force, and on the whole he is disinclined to cling to the faith in a future life. He holds that the immortality of a dead man resides in the memory of the living, his 'finer part shining within ever-faithful hearts 'of those bereft.' He pursues this theme in a large number of his most serious and affecting lyrics, most gravely perhaps in 'The To-be-Forgotten' and in 'The Superseded.' This sense of the forlorn condition of the dead, surviving only in the dwindling memory of the living, inspires what has some claims to be considered the loveliest of all Mr. Hardy's poems, 'Friends Beyond,' which in its tenderness, its humour, and its pathos contains in a few pages every characteristic of his genius.

His speculation perceives the dead as a crowd of slowly vanishing phantoms, clustering in their ineffectual longing round the footsteps of those through whom alone they continue to exist. This conception has inspired Mr. Hardy with several wonderful visions, among which the spectacle of 'The Souls 'of the Slain' in the Boer War, alighting, like vast flights of moths, over Portland Bill at night, is the most remarkable. It has the sublimity and much of the character of some apocalyptic design by Blake. The volume of 1902 contains a whole group of phantasmal pieces of this kind, where there is frequent mention of spectres, who address the poet in the accents of Nature, as in the unrhymed ode called 'The Mother 'Mourns.' The obsession of old age, with its physical decay ('I look into my glass'), the inevitable division which leads to that isolation which the poet regards as the greatest of adversities ('The Impercipient'), the tragedies of moral indecision, the contrast between the tangible earth and the bodyless ghosts, and endless repetition of the cry, 'Why find 'we us here?' and of the question 'Has some Vast Imbecility 'framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry,' all start from the overwhelming love of physical life and acquaintance with its possibilities, which Mr. Hardy possesses to an inordinate degree.

It would be ridiculous at the close of an article to attempt any discussion of the huge dramatic panorama which many believe to be Mr. Hardy's most weighty contribution to English literature. The spacious theatre of 'The Dynasts,' with its comprehensive and yet concise realizations of vast passages of human history, is a work which calls for a commentary as lengthy as itself, and yet needs no commentary at all. No work of the imagination is more its own interpreter than this sublime historic peep-show, this rolling vision of the Napoleonic chronicle drawn on the broadest lines, and yet in detail made up of intensely concentrated and vivid glimpses of reality. But the subject of our present study, the lyrical poetry of Mr. Hardy, is not largely illustrated in 'The Dynasts,' except by the choral interludes of the phantom intelligences, which have great lyrical value, and by three or four admirable songs.

When we resume the effect which the poetry of Mr. Hardy makes upon the careful reader, we note, as we have indicated already, a sense of unity of direction throughout. Mr. Hardy has expressed himself in a thousand ways, but has never altered his vision. From 1867 to 1917, through half a century of imaginative creation, he has not modified the large outlines of his art in the smallest degree. To early readers of his poems, before the full meaning of them became evident, his voice sounded inharmonious, because it did not fit in with the exquisite melodies of the later Victorian age. But Mr. Hardy, with characteristic pertinacity, did not attempt to alter his utterance in the least, and now we can all perceive, if we take the trouble to do so, that what seemed harsh in his poetry was his peculiar and personal mode of interpreting his thoughts to the world. As in his novels so in his poems, he has chosen to remain local, to be the interpreter for present and future times of one rich and neglected province of the British realm. From his standpoint there he contemplates the vast aspect of life, but it seems huge and misty to him, and he broods over the tiny incidents of Wessex idiosyncracy. His irony is audacious and even sardonic, and few poets have been less solicitous to please their weaker brethren. But no poet of modern times has been more careful to avoid the abstract and to touch upon the real.

EDMUND GOSSE.

THE THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION OF THE CLERGY

AT the present time plans for reconstruction and adaptation to new circumstances are being matured in connection with various departments of Church organization and also in the curricula and examinations of the Universities.

It is therefore opportune to call attention to what has for some time been a crying need both in Church and University, and with which both Church and University have just now a chance of dealing in a practical manner.

There is within the Church of England a growing sense that the intellectual training of its ministry is inadequate to the efficient discharge of the Church's teaching office. And at any rate in that University of which the present writer can speak from personal experience, the time has certainly arrived when considerable changes are called for in its educational system, in so far as students contemplating ordination are concerned. The parts to be played by the Church at large and by the University respectively in effecting the desired increase of educational equipment in theology are different, and they may therefore be discussed separately.

The responsibility of the Church as a whole with regard to the matter before us may most suitably be dealt with first in order; and the fact to which it is in the first instance the concern of the Church to attend is that the duration of the course of intellectual training received by candidates for the ministry is at present much too short, however efficiently the University may fulfil its function in relation to its students during their period of study. No amount of reconstruction of its theological curriculum on the part of the University would avail wholly to meet the deficiency which exists, so long as the present duration of the course of education remains as short as it is, though matters might be somewhat improved, and it is at present doubtful whether any serious reconstruction, as distinct from enlargement of the curriculum such as prolonged residence at the University would enable, will

Daily Telegraph.

16 Dec 14

KING OF THE BELGIANS.

A RICH RECORD OF PITY AND PRAISE.

By W. L. COURTNEY.

The Greeks had a proverb, "Beautiful things are difficult." If we wish to achieve something of perennial value, which will endure and overcome the accidents of fortune and the vagaries of chance, we shall have to spend laborious days and refuse to be content with smaller triumphs. It is impossible to avoid a reflection like this as we turn over the pages of this beautiful book, dedicated to King Albert of Belgium.

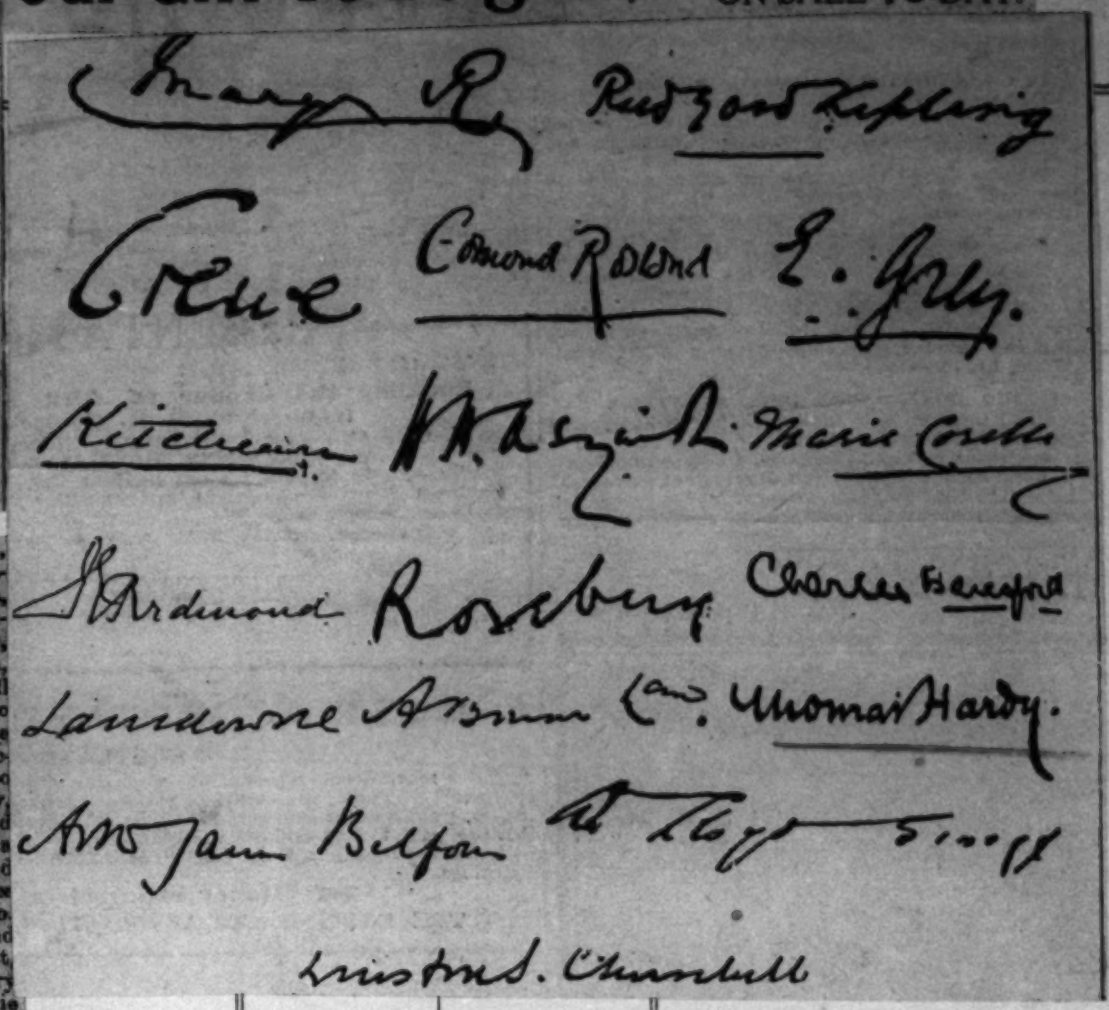
Are there any classes or ranks of political, civil, and social life which do not find representation here? There are statesmen, politicians, publicists, diplomatists of high rank and prestige—men like Mr. Asquith, Lord Rosebery, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Curzon, Lord Crewe, M. Paul Cambon, Count Benckendorff—all sending words of good cheer and sympathy to unhappy Belgium and her King. There are musicians—Mascagni, Debussy, Elgar, Mackenzie, and others—giving of their riches to the common weal. There are artists—Lavery, Brock, Kay Nielsen, Bernard Partridge and Raven-Hill, Dulac, Rackham—each with a characteristic offering. There are actors and dramatists—Sir Herbert Tree, Sir Charles Wyndham, Sir Arthur Pinero, Alfred Sutro. There are poets, novelists, literary men and women—Thomas Hardy, Maurice Hewlett, Alfred Noyes, Herbert Trench, Mrs. Humphry Ward, Edmund Gosse, Flora Annie Steel, Marie Corelli, Mrs. Meynell, Arnold Bennett, Gilbert Murray, May Sinclair, Israel Zangwill, John Galsworthy, Mr. Hall Caine (the Editor himself), to say nothing of foreign masters, Paul Bourget, Pierre Loti, Anatole France, Maeterlinck, Verhaeren, Henri Bergson.

One would like also, if only space permitted, to quote in full the happy fancy which has inspired Mr. Thomas Hardy's "Sonnet on the Belgian Expatriation." The poet dreams that people from the Land of Chimes come over to this country to hoist their bells on our towers and citadels, and play to us the celebrated carillons which we associate with the Belgian towns. It was but a dream, however, and the reality was far different.

Then I awoke: and lo! before me stood
The visioned ones, but pale and full of fear;
From Bruges they came, and Antwerp, and Ostend,
No carillons in their train. Vicissitude
Had left these tinkling to the invaders' ear,
And ravaged street, and smouldering gable-end.

Daily Sketch. 16 Dec. 1914

Our Gift To Belgium: "KING ALBERT'S BOOK" ON SALE TO-DAY.



Nottingham Guardian.

"KING ALBERT'S BOOK."

NOTABLE TRIBUTE

On behalf of the *Daily Telegraph* Belgian Fund, there is to-day issued by that journal, in conjunction with the *Daily Sketch*, the *Glasgow Herald*, and Messrs. Hodder and Stoughton, "King Albert's Book" (3s.). From every point of view this is an outstanding publication, presenting a remarkable tribute to the Belgian King and people from representative men and women throughout the world, with many beautiful illustrations. Leaders in every sphere of thought and action have joined in testifying to the splendid self-sacrifice and noble conduct of the gallant nation, which has had to bear the heaviest burden of the war.

Our own poets who have helped in the volume include Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, Alfred Noyes, Alice Meynell, William Watson, Austin Dobson, and Sir Owen Seaman. We extract a moving sonnet on the Belgian expatriation by the first-named:

I dreamt that people from the Land of Chimes
Arrived one autumn morning with their bells,
To hoist them on the towers and citadels
Of my own country, that the musical rhymes
Rung by them into space at measured times
Amid the market's daily stir and stress,
And the night's empty starlit silentness,
Might solace souls of this and kindred climes.

Then I awoke: and lo, before me stood
The visioned ones, but pale and full of fear;
From Bruges they came, and Antwerp, and Ostend,
No carillons in their train. Vicissitude
Had left these tinkling to the invaders' ear,
And ravaged street, and smouldering gable-end.

The Daily News

Nov 13 1912

MR. THOMAS HARDY.

(By A. G. GARDINER.)

"Thomas Hardy: A Critical Study." By Lascelles Abercrombie. Martin Secker. 7s. 6d. net.

"The Works of Thomas Hardy." Wessex Edition. Vols. XIII. and XIV. Macmillan. 7s. 6d. net per vol.

Although Mr. Hardy may claim to be "the last leaf upon the tree, In the spring" his powers are unabated and much may still be expected from his pen. But he can hardly add to the structure or significance of his work and there is no impropriety therefore in giving him that attention which is reserved for those whose task is completed. The fine Wessex edition which is now nearing completion is a splendid tribute to his genius and an evidence of his assured place in English literature. In Mr. Hardy's slight prefaces to the volumes there is the feeling of one who regards the fabric of his work as complete, and who has little to add and nothing to take away. How various his achievement is is shown in the two volumes before us, "The Well-Beloved" and "A Group of Noble Dames," the one a singular fantasy of temperament, the other one of those series of new "Canterbury Tales" which form so delightful a diversion from the main theme of the novelist's invention.

It is the unity of Hardy's labours which is the first impression of a comprehensive survey of such an edition as the present. And that aspect is properly emphasised in Mr. Abercrombie's study. In regard to that study Mr. Abercrombie is to be congratulated on his first serious appearance in prose. It is an event which promises a rich addition to the thin and uninspired resources of English criticism. Mr. Abercrombie has that aloofness that gives his praise and his blame the authority of a dispassionate judgment. It is not that he is without sympathies. He has the sensitive feeling of the poet, but his emotions are governed by a sound mind and a large intellectual tolerance. Mr. Hardy is fortunate in such a commentator. Hitherto the ablest appreciation of his genius has been that published in France by M. Hitchcock. English criticism has now said a word worthy of the subject. It is perilous, perhaps, to say that it is the final word. That must be left to posterity. Yet it is difficult to believe that posterity will reverse this penetrating and patient judgment.

Fiction, Drama, and Sculpture.

Mr. Abercrombie starts from the proposition that until the Wessex novels, the modern art of fiction lacked that metaphysical power of art which gave to the older instruments of drama and sculpture their greatness and completeness. "The highest art must have a metaphysic: the final satisfaction of man's creative desire is only to be found in aesthetic formation of some credible correspondence between perceived existence and a conceived abeo-lutaness of reality." It is because Thomas Hardy has deliberately put the art of his fiction under the control of a metaphysic that Mr. Abercrombie claims that he has made the novel capable of the highest service to man's consciousness—made it truly the equal of drama and sculpture. That the metaphysic should be implicit rather than stated is proper to the spirit of fiction; that it should be tragical is the inevitable result of the conflict between the human will and the senseless process of the world. Mr. Abercrombie does not discuss Mr. Hardy's metaphysic—that is the province of philosophy not of art. The vision of men—charged with aspirations and desires—caught in the relentless toils of

The purposive, unmotived, dominant Thing
Which sways in brooding dark their wayfaring

may be a vision of the night and not of the day. It may be the vision of a recluse brooding in solitude over his own conception of reality and shadowing all his perceptions of the activities of life with his painful obsession. The question for the critic is not the truth or falsity of the position, but the mastery of the art with which it is presented.

Fundamental Ideas.

Out of this fundamental thought, this correspondence of conception and perception, springs the unrivalled unity of Hardy's work. It is difficult to avoid the architectural simile in dealing with it. Mr. Abercrombie uses that simile constantly. "Under the Greenwood Tree" is the porch to this great building; the nave is composed of "Far from the Madding Crowd," "The Mayor of Casterbridge," "The Return of the Native," "The Woodlanders," "Tess," and "Jude the Obscure"; the choir consists of "The Dynasts"; the poems and the minor novels are the annexe of the main structure. Throughout the design is unchanged. The note is struck even in the porch, in that sweetest of English comedies, "Under the Greenwood Tree," which closes with the hint of tragic secrecy, it deepens through the nave until the implicit agony of the conflict between man and "the unweeting Will" utters itself in the explicit rebellion of "Jude," it rises to its complete summation in "The Dynasts," which Mr. Abercrombie truly describes as "one of the most momentous achievements of modern literature." The last word of "The Dynasts," which may be called the last word of the Hardy tragedy, is a word of pale optimism. Whether it is to be regarded as the last straw of the drowning man or a concession to the hope that springs eternal, but which the whole scheme of the Wessex drama rejects, is not clear.

The material of the drama is at once simple and stupendous, human and cosmic—a few peasants, types of the general sin of personal existence and personal desire in a universe of indifferent fate. The protagonists are nature and man—the theme, the conflict between the unconquerable soul and that blind Will that

. . . heaves through space and moulds the times,
With mortals for Its fingers.

In such a struggle man emerges splendid and abject—splendid in his defiant resistance to blind circumstance, abject in the futility of his challenge to "the all-urging Will, raptly magnipotent." Tess paying the debt she does not owe, Marty South crooning her lament by the grave, Henchard stealing away to die in solitude, the figures of the Napoleonic drama fighting and intriguing while the spirits of the air chant their pitying or ironic comments—all typify the eternal struggle of the free will against the iron bars of circumstance.

The machinery of the drama has the elemental quality that befits the theme. It moves with the rhythm of inexorable fate. It is rich in climax, yet, no matter how unexpected, the climax is always attained with the simple inevitableness of a natural law. The humour is primal; the setting cosmic; the language logical rather than potential—stiff and exact rather than poetical.

Mr. Abercrombie has laid the lovers of the Wessex drama under a deep obligation by his illuminating analysis.

THE

CAMBRIDGE MAGAZINE

1D.

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The Poetry of Thomas Hardy

"Q" began his lecture last Wednesday on this subject by reminding his audience how on a previous occasion he had said that the task of appraising modern work had to be done, although one's judgment on it may be faulty. This statement, however, needs qualification. Elders may help the younger generation to understand Chaucer, Shakespeare, Dryden or Wordsworth, for these are removed equally far from both, and older people have the sad advantage of having studied them a little longer. With poets of the time of Tennyson, Browning and Arnold, difference of age asserts itself, and middle-aged men, young men of the 'nineties, children of this century, read them at perceptible removes. Here again it is good that seniors should testify concerning these men who were alive when they themselves were young, for it appears to be the rule for each new generation to turn iconoclast on its father's poetic gods. When we come down past Morris and Swinburne to Yeats or Francis Thompson, we find the older generation admiring them as generously as youth; but their work exercises no authority upon their contemporaries, who criticise it freely as poetry written by the best men of their own era. "Now," said Sir Arthur, "take the young poets who are your contemporaries. Of them I say sadly, resignedly, that a man even of my years has no right to speak, or very little power to speak usefully. Young poets do not write for antiquity, nor for middle-age; they write for *you* . . . . and we can only keep you admiring the things we admire at the cost of pauperising your minds."

Now Thomas Hardy can be claimed as an exception to this. His first novel dates back to 1871, and his career as a novelist comes to a grand close in 1895, at the age of 55. Three years later he published his first book of verse, *Wessex Poems*, and though this contains many poems composed long before 1898, nothing can obscure the fact that Hardy then definitely turned his back on prose fiction and started to appeal to a new generation in verse. A second volume, *Poems of the Past and the Present*, followed in 1901, and was succeeded by *The Dynasts*, *Time's Laughing Stocks* (1909) and *Satires of Circumstance* (collected in 1914) while his latest book *Moments of Vision*, appeared late in 1917. These would seem, by their dates, to concern us all equally if not similarly. That Hardy's Muse is predominantly melancholy is no bar at all to the appreciation of young people; if it were a bar the most of Shelley, Byron, Keats and the poets of the Modern Irish school would be closed to youth, which is absurd. Sadness dwells not with middle age: "She dwells with Beauty—beauty that must die." Even Hardy's pessimism is never faded, nor does it play with old sentimentalities; the man is always thinking, and his perplexities, being all-important and yet unsolved, must be faced by this generation. At any rate he contradicts in practice the rather cheap pessimism of Matthew Arnold about the drying up of poesy in the writer. (Arnold, indeed, had a tendency to be Wordsworth's widow—like Mrs. Gummidge to fall "a-thinking of the old 'un.") "The poems in his first-published volume," continued the lecturer, "were stiff, awkward. They often achieved a curious, haunting countrified lilt; they worked always true to pattern; you felt about them, too, that the verse held something real struggling constricted. But . . . . they were architectural drafts. When they told a story you wondered why he, so well able to do it, had not written this particular story in prose; the poetic thought was there: but the words were just hard and precise. They faceted no rays, they melted into none of those magical chemical combinations out of which words became poetry. Years pass with their efforts, and then in his latest volume Hardy, at the age of 77, shows that he has learnt to utter a lyrical note in a poem which in a poet of ordinary evolution would fall naturally among the *Juvenilia*.

Lalage's coming:
Where is she now, O?
Turning to bow, O,
And smile, is she,
Just at parting,
Parting, parting,
As she is starting
To come to me? . . . . .

Here we see how this poet, whose metrical muscles were so stiff and hard at fifty-odd, has at seventy-odd worked them supple, so that the verse cadences to the feeling.

Hardy is first and foremost a countryman. His mind, like most countryfolk's in this great little island—so introspective because insular, so cumbered intensively, so piled up with history

are copies of the long-saved fragments; and it is only natural to suppose that they have already been retouched. Even then, it is interesting to follow the writer in his final struggles to fit expression to thought, and to speculate on the reason of his hesitations. In general, the changes seem to show that rhythm is not inherent to Mr. Hardy's genius, that he was more a poet in conception than in execution. Even to-day these verses have little of that music

that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses upon grass;

and what they have, was probably won by frequent recording.

and local tradition—must dig vertically down through strata. The historical sense which he has acquired through book-learning feels downwards, through the mould of Norman, Dane, Saxon, Celt and tribes beyond history, to the geological formations. Further, the tales of old time which haunt a true countryman's imagination are tales of violence, of lonely houses where suppressed passions inhabit to flame out in murder or suicide, to make a legend to haunt a cross-road or a mile-post. Then, too, every village in rural England is a small shop of gossip. But though a gossip's, this man's heart is as tender as Blake's—witness the short poem called *The Blinded Bird*. Above all his pity is for women, partly because of the evanescence of their bloom, but chiefly because he sees the increase of our race to rest on an unfair game in which, nine throws out of ten, the dies are loaded against the woman, while God, or whatever gods may be, decide the victim. His noble indignation at this has great excuse when it soars down to bitterest irony, as in the ditty of two country-bred girls meeting in London :—

> "O 'Melia, my dear, this does everything crown?
> Who could have supposed I should meet you in town?
> And whence such fair garments, such prosperity?"
> —"O didn't you know I'd been ruined?" said she. . . .
>
> —"I wish I had feathers, a fine sweeping gown,
> And a delicate face, and could strut about town!"
> "My dear, a raw country girl, such as you be,
> Isn't equal to that. You ain't ruined," said she.

Women, Sir Arthur went on, are more impatient of irony than men; and when Hardy turns his on them they eye it suspiciously; they hate instinctively that which shows their secret ways of power at work under show of servility. It can be scarcely less heartening to men to be faced with the question—

> Has some vast Imbecility,
> Mighty to build and blind, e/
> But impotent to tend,
> Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry?
>
> Or came we of an Automaton
> Unconscious of our pains?
> Or are we live remains
> Of godhead, dying downwards, brain and eye now gone?

It is a childless creed, with no more evidence than Meredith's but Meredith at least has hope, hope for the young.

The lecturer then passed on to *The Dynasts*, the great ironic drama in which the poet confounds any accusations of provincialism by laying Europe beneath us, "flat as to an eagle's eye, a map with little things in multitudes, ants in armies scurrying along the threads which are roads, violently agitated in nodules which are cities." We as it were sit aloft and look down, the focus of vision sliding up and down, narrowing on the House of Commons or expanding to sweep the field of Austerlitz; now we watch the Retreat from Moscow and now see into a cellar full of druken deserters looking out in the snowy road where Sir John Moore's army straggles along to Corunna. The diction of the poem rarely rises to match its conception; but we must not judge a work of the range and scope of *The Dynasts* apart from its total impression, and that is tremendous. One naturally compares its philosophy with Tolstoi's *War and Peace*, but while the Russian idealist sees Napoleon's ends shaped by a Divinity watching over Sion, the other can detect no purpose, or no beneficent one. For all he can see God works a magnipotent Will but

> Like a knitter drowsed
> Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness
> Since life first was: and ever so will weave.

And there we must leave it.

The Saturday Review
Mar 22 1913

THE "WESSEX" HARDY.

The Works of Thomas Hardy. Wessex Edition. "Desperate Remedies"; "The Hand of Ethelberta"; "A Laodicean"; "Wessex Poems" and "Poems of the Past and the Present"; "The Dynasts", Parts I. and II.; "The Dynasts", Part III. and "Time's Laughingstocks." London: Macmillan. 1913. 7s. 6d. net each.

Three more volumes of prose and three of verse complete this Wessex edition. [illegible]. The poems, with which Mr. Hardy began his writing, and to which he has returned in his later years, are even more devastating documents in pessimism than the novels. We hate poetry, says Keats, which has a design upon us, and Mr. Hardy seems determined to emphasise failure and disaster, especially on the sexual side—the many mistakes of love, the bareness of life when love's brief rapture is over. Within a few pages of "Time's Laughingstocks" we come upon the characteristic words "grief-groan" and "pleasure-gleam", "logicless labours", and such lines as

> "A fourth dimension, say the guides,
> To matter is conceivable",

which are not poetry at all. Mr. Hardy often packs his verse close with poignant words: they are wonderfully effective within their bounds, but we feel that they have made a successful struggle to get themselves all in. Then again he sinks to some common word or phrase, as when in "The Cave of the Unborn" he writes of the earth as a "beauty-spot". Perhaps he speaks "half in anger, half in scorn", like that Mycerinus whose quick fate was cruelly announced to him, but his philosophic terminology is inevitably dull in verse, as in such phrases as "nescience reaffirmed". At any rate Mr. Hardy is a curious and interesting innovator in poetic style, though we may prefer the accomplishment of simpler pieces like "The Voice of the Thorn", which seems to sigh:

> "O win[illegible] is trying ter/
> To sojourners here!"

Like the "Wessex Poems", "The Dynasts" is variable in quality, eloquent and verbose, abounding in fine conceptions and dull prose scanned as verse. Mr. Hardy suggests that if it is to be acted at all, the monotonic delivery and dreamy conventional gestures of the old Christmas mummers might by their curiously hypnotising impressiveness suggest a way. But where are the old mummers now? We heard them often years ago; but even then they had begun to be contaminated with that cheap and essentially modern gaiety which is most music-hall, most melancholy.

basis they require.

The analogy, in other words, is no mere vague and arbitrary selection of coincidences. For twenty years it has served as a working hypothesis in the research whose results are described in our current issue; and these results, which are now made public for the first time, shew that the problem of standardisation of the construction of scales to serve as the basis for colour-harmony, can be solved on the most vigorously scientific lines. To the implications of this discovery we shall return next week, but first it has proved necessary to set down in some detail the precise nature of the inquiries which preceded it, for at certain essential points the prevailing conception of colour is in need of serious modification. Such a statement, however, cannot be lightly made, and this must be

Daily Post
20.2.12

THE BIRMINGHAM

BIRMINGHAM ART GALLERY.

MS. OF HARDY'S "WESSEX POEMS."

At a meeting of the Museum and Art Gallery Committee, held yesterday, a valuable and important gift was received from Mr. Thomas Hardy in the form of the original manuscript of the "Wessex Poems" and his original illustrations thereto. Through the offices of a friend Mr. Hardy decided to present to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, the British Museum, Birmingham, Manchester, Aberdeen, Dorchester, Washington, and Royal Library, Windsor, some of his manuscripts. Birmingham is indeed fortunate in securing the "Wessex Poems," with its admirable and interesting illustrations, and all lovers of literature will be grateful to the distinguished writer for his thought and generosity.

SOME NOTES ON THE MS.

The most popular of Thomas Hardy's novels is, undoubtedly, "Far from the Madding Crowd"; and justly so, for it appeals to the widest circle of readers, while by the power and richness of its style it must always excite the admiration of the initiated. "The Return of the Native" is his most poetical work; the sombre grandeur of its descriptions and the subtle skill with which its atmosphere is communicated distinguish it from all creations in the same class; but its flavour is too delicate for the public palate. "The Mayor of Casterbridge" takes a prominent place among the best constructed tales in our language; some will, however, consider it too artificial—though so are "Œdipus Rex" and "Othello." "Tess of the d'Urbervilles" by certain passages, "Under the Greenwood Tree," as a whole, need not fear comparison with other landscapes. And yet one may well claim that when all these are read, though perhaps not till they are read, the most interesting of all Hardy's books is the little volume of "Wessex Poems," published in 1898. The manuscript of these poems was received from the author last autumn by Mr. Whitworth Wallis; it has now been suitably bound by Miss Adams, of Broadway, and was handed over to the Art Gallery Committee yesterday. It will be immediately exhibited in the Long Gallery.

The "Wessex Poems" are of prime importance for the understanding of Hardy's genius, because they contain its first expression in some twenty little pieces written before he became famous as a novelist. We may consider them as a sort of poetic journal in which the future author, without any thought of possible publication, noted down the first preoccupations of his mind and the first movements of a personality fashioning its attitude towards life. Is one inclined to think that, between "Under the Greenwood Tree" and "Jude the Obscure," age and the soreness of experience had darkened Hardy's outlook? Read "Her Dilemma," and you will see that in 1866 he felt that in this ill-conditioned world happiness was neither on the right hand nor on the left. Or does one wonder at his curious detachment from the characters that move over his stage? At his cold aloofness which seems to suggest that human suffering is only a spectacle for him? Read "She, to Him, ii."; already in 1866 Hardy viewed life from the idealistic standpoint, and considered the external world as owing its reality to the brain that conceived of it. Or is one amazed at the curious fashion in which lives are interwoven in his dramas, at the frequent intervention of what men call Chance? In his fine sonnet "Hap" we see the purblind Doomsters casting, heedlessly, moans to this mortal and joys to that, while "Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain."

And so these early verses reveal the thinker already poring over that insoluble puzzle of which birth, fate, and death are the chief elements, and they announce the philosophical preoccupations which were later to cast their shadow o'er his page, when he attempted to cheer the monotony of earthly durance by copying the faces of his fellow prisoners.

CORRECTIONS AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

The actual manuscript of the "Wessex Poems" has an intrinsic value in its corrections and its illustrations. It would, of course, have been more curious still had we here the poems as placed on paper by the young architect at London. These are copies of the long-saved fragments; and it is only natural to suppose that they have already been retouched. Even then, it is interesting to follow the writer in his final struggles to fit expression to thought, and to speculate on the reason of his hesitations. In general, the changes seem to show that rhythm is not inherent to Mr. Hardy's genius, that he was more a poet in conception than in execution. Even to-day these verses have little of that music

that softer falls
Than petals from blown roses upon grass;

and what they have, was probably won by frequent according.

[illegible]
Intermissive aim at the thing sufficeth.

as an improvement on

Curt and casual aim at the thing sufficeth.

Better than

When alienation comes of heart and mind

is the change,

When in your being, heart concedes to mind, &c.

While in the verses,

I but found her in that, going
On my errant path unknowing,
I did not out-skirt the spot
That no spot on earth excels,
— Where she dwells!

the poet did well to alter the original fourth line,

By the breadth of some few ells.

Other alterations tone down personal or country forms to less obtrusive expressions: "bloothing" to "flowering," "fellowly" to "fellow-like," "afterclaps" to "afterhaps," &c.; but to follow out these variants in detail would require a close collation of manuscript and text.

The illustrations provide another source of interest. No doubt, most readers of the "Wessex Poems" have felt a certain disappointment before the flat and thin reproductions to be found in the published volume. The originals are much richer and more artistic. The hill with setting sun and two shadowy figures, which looks so common-place in print, has really, in Mr. Hardy's wash drawing, a poetic suggestion of melancholy; the blotchy combination of rain, fog, and marsh which faces page 84, in the pocket edition is in the original an easily-recognisable rendering of Waterloo's sombre plain; Gibraltar, a zincy block, indeed, in my text, is endowed with life and light by the artist. Architectural the sketches always remain; but they do in the original illustrate the thought of the writer, while in the printed edition, they are often reduced to a monotonous flatness which illustrates nothing. Lastly, as one glances over these drawings, one cannot help noting that here once more, as in his choice of scenes and characters, Mr. Hardy betrays his innermost temperament. Look them through: a churchyard at eventide; a sun dial with its heavy blur of shaded hours—*Vulnerant omnes, ultima necat*; a sand-glass on which settle two butterflies; a chancel where two lovers plight their troth above vaults full of dead men's bones; a broken key; a vase full of faded flowers. They are fitly painted in wash and sepia. Let it be added, that the wide spreading meads and fields of Dorset relieve the gloom. Sad thoughts on human destinies, made sadder by the contrast with fair disdainful Nature, *l'impassible théâtre, Que ne peut remuer le pied de ses acteurs*": that is the Hardy that may be found once more in this most interesting manuscript given by him to the city of Birmingham. The city is much indebted to Mr. Thomas Hardy for this most valuable gift, and the Arts Committee have to thank Mr. Sydney Cockerell, of the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, for his kind offices in securing this particular manuscript.

F. A. H.

T.P.'s Weekly

3 Jan. 1915

Replies.

7,115.—**Thomas Hardy.**—Does W. E. H. mean by "The Ballad of Valenciennes" Hardy's poem in Dorset dialect, entitled "Valenciennes," and beginning:—

We trenched, we trumpeted and drummed,
And from our mortars tons of iron hummed
Athort the ditch, that month we bombed
The town o' Valencien.

It is to be found in his "Wessex Poems" (?1899).—A. W.

THE TIMES

LITERARY SUPPLEMENT,

JANUARY 16, 1919.

How many French and English scholars have had to deplore that submergence of all fairness in the passions of the moment which has cut them off from the German scholars whom they knew! Sometimes the bitterness has been mitigated; one remembers how von Wilamowitz declared that he would go on reading Thomas Hardy and Anatole France. But the phenomenon recurs too often to be ignored.

("The Scholar in Politics")

In an interview with a journalist published this week, Mr. Thomas Hardy sanctions his recent divagations into poetry, not only by his own natural bent, but also by an appeal to a great poet's name. "You are probably aware," he said, "that I began by writing poetry, but I had to give it up for something more remunerative. Most of my novels, however, were first conceived as poems. With regard to an early one—I think it was "A Pair of Blue Eyes"—I had a letter from Coventry Patmore, to whom I was then utterly unknown, saying the tale ought to have been told in verse, as the theme was far more suitable for that medium than for prose."

Another passage in the interview has a special interest for the Catholic reader: "I often wish," Mr. Hardy confessed, "I had lived in the Middle Ages, when the Church was supreme and unquestioned. Life must have been very sweet and beautiful then, before doubts had arisen. The cathedral was the centre of society, and everything fitted in harmoniously round it. Christianity appeals very powerfully both to my emotional and artistic faculties."

THE NATION.

[July 13, 1918.

Mr. Sassoon is evidently in some sense aware that an element of creation, or of art, is lacking to his work. Perhaps, on reading some of his own lines, he may have felt that they were not, after all, a new kind of poetry; and he may have been sensible of some inexplicable difference between his own verses and those of Mr. Thomas Hardy, which are a new kind of poetry. For we think we can detect a certain straining after pregnancy, due to the attempt to catch the method of Mr. Hardy. The overloading of epithet and verb in such a line as—

He winked his prying torch with patching glare,

imitates the mere accidents of a poetic method, of which the real strength and newness consists exactly in the element which has no place at all in Mr. Sassoon's mental composition. Against the permanence of the philosophic background in Mr. Hardy's work, each delicate shade of direct emotion is conveyed with all the force that comes of complete differentiation.

Country Life. February 1919

Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses, by Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan and Co., Limited.)

THERE are a few of the greatest types of literature that dominate the mood of the reader. To these Mr. Hardy's verses belong. Whether they are familiar or not, the reading of them banishes all peevish and worrying thought. For the time being the mind is surrendered to the enchanter. The reason would appear to be that the poet shares with the greatest writers who ever lived that constant vision of the life of man, its vicissitudes and brevity, its little turmoils and endless sleep. All that came into my mind on turning over the leaves of the new volume, *Moments of Vision and Miscellaneous Verses*, which contains many old favourites. It called up from distant days a memory from the sea side. It was evening with a red, westering sun, a sea almost still, and a merry crowd who by chance had approached a little church where a patriarchal voice was reading from the Book of Ecclesiastes. The passage is one of the most arresting in literature. It was beautifully read.

Nobody can read the Bible without a Bible accent. This accent is partly due to the custom and legend generated in the course of centuries. But it must have had its origin in the solemn truths dealt with. In this case the voice was strong and clear, in spite of the reader's age. The passage was that unmatched description of death without any of the make-believes with which men of all ages have tried to hide its grim reality.

> Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets:
>
> Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern.
>
> Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.
>
> Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity.

The voice of the reader calling up this picture of the end, when the mourner shall "go about the streets" and "the silver cord be loosed," fell on the ear like the stroke of "the surly, sullen bell." One has heard a similar effect produced by a mother reading to her little girl from "The Pilgrim's Progress," her voice showing at once an anxiety to make the passage understood to the young mind and a sense of that dim journey which Christian has to pursue.

The hold of "The Pilgrim's Progress" upon the imagination is that Christian is "Everyman." His burden is Everyman's. So are his hopes, hesitations and fears. The particular passage is not the most notable, but it has in its very plainness the characteristic quality of the book:

> Now, when they were gone over the stile, they began to contrive with themselves what they should do at that stile to prevent those that should come after from falling into the hands of Giant Despair. So they consented to erect there a pillar, and to engrave upon the side thereof this sentence: "Over this stile is the way to Doubting Castle, which is kept by Giant Despair, who despiseth the King of the Celestial Country, and seeks to destroy his holy pilgrims." Many, therefore, that followed after, read what was written, and escaped the danger.

What one means may be better exemplified perhaps by a reference to those passages which describe the passing over of Mr. Honest and Mr. Valiant-for-the-truth.

> After this it was noised abroad that Mr. Valiant-for-the-truth was taken with a summons by the same post as the other, and had this for a token that the summons was true, that his pitcher was broken at the fountain. (Eccles. xii, 6.) When he understood it he called for his friends and told them of it. Then said he, "I am going to my Father's; and though with great difficulty I have got hither, yet now I do not repent me of all the troubles I have been at to arrive where I am. My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage, and my courage and skill to him who can get it."

These illustrations are mentioned in the hope that they suggest in some degree the mood into which Hardy has the power to throw his readers even at the opening of the book. Here, too, is a writer who treats of time always in its relation to eternity. It may come up as a message from a face that has long passed into darkness seen in the gloom.

> "O I am tired of waiting," she said,
> "Night, morn, noon, afternoon;
> So cold it is in my lonely bed,
> And I thought you would join me soon!"
>
> I rose and neared the window-glass,
> But vanished thence had she:
> Only a pallid moth, alas,
> Tapped at the pane for me.

Or it may come as a memory of the past:

> How dry it was on a far-back day
> When straws hung the hedge and around,
> When amid the sheaves in amorous play
> In curtained bonnets and light array
> Moved a bevy now underground!

The same impression is created by the little poem in memory of William Barnes, dated October 11th, 1886:

> Looking hard and harder I knew what it meant—
> The sudden shine sent from the livid east scene;
> It meant the sun mirrored by the coffin of my friend there,
> Turning to the road from his green.
>
> To take his last journey forth—he who in his prime
> Trudged so many a time from that gate athwart the land!
> Thus a farewell to me he signalled on his grave-way
> As with a wave of his hand.

The attraction here is that the thought of the poet, roughly as it may be expressed, is the same as that of many natural sounds. Sir Walter Scott caught it in the breeze sighing through the fir tops; Tennyson in the noise of running water. During the war imagination found it in those distant rumblings which told of battle on the French and Flemish lines. A moorland peasant well known to the writer found it in the night call of the curlew. No higher tribute can be paid to Mr. Hardy's verse than to say that an echo of this voice which has been heard through so many ages in different notes invades his line as one reads the phrases, often harsh and crude, often merely ejaculatory, but always in touch with the invisible.

OBSERVER, SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 1919.

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.

MOMENTS OF VISION AND MISCELLANEOUS VERSES. By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan. 6s. net.)

Goethe once said to Eckermann: "Reality must give both impulse and material for the production of poems. A particular case becomes universal and poetic by the very circumstance that it is treated by a poet. . . . I attach no value to poems snatched out of the air." The words of one old man and great poet occur to the mind as peculiarly apt to the work of another old man and great poet. All his life (no matter what he may say about early "pot-boilers") Mr. Hardy has been a devoted student and interpreter of reality as he saw it. And as, in Meredith's poem, Melampus went with his eye ever close to earth, and doing good to her little creatures, and so won the kiss of the snake and the breath of Apollo in his mouth, so Mr. Hardy, with his eye ever on the object, looking close to reality for his impulse and his material, ever pitiful and ever acutely sensitive, has been able in his declining years to prove to the world what he himself well knew from the start, that he too had the breath of Apollo in his mouth, and was a poet. In this, his latest volume, each poem is a "moment of vision," in which the plain fact, the everyday occurrence, the precise detail is seen and felt with so much intensity that it becomes universal. The eye of the seer, fixed on the object, pierces through it to the truth of all that it symbolises.

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Let us take as an example a poem that is by no means selected as the best in the book:—

They sing their dearest songs—
He, she, all of them—yea,
Treble and tenor and bass,
And one to play;
With the candles mooning each face . . .
Ah, no; the years O!
How the sick leaves reel down in throngs!

They clear the creeping moss—
Elders and juniors—yea,
Making the pathways neat
And the garden gay;
And they build a shady seat . . .
Ah, no; the years O!
See, the webbed white storm-birds wing across.

They are blithely breakfasting all—
Men and maidens—yea,
Under the summer tree,
With a glimpse of the bay,
While pet birds come to the knee . . .
Ah, no; the years O!
And the rotten rose is ript from the wall.

They change to a high new house,
He, she, all of them—yea,
Clocks and carpets and chairs
On the lawn all day,
And brightest things that are theirs . . .
Ah, no; the years O!
Down their chiselled names the rain-drop ploughs.

Candles, gardening, clocks, carpets and chairs—there is "reality" enough and vividness enough there. And out of it flowers a universality, a poetic beauty, an emotional force that many a fine poem "snatched out of the air" entirely lacks. We might have chosen a more striking example—say, that poem of "The Five Students," in which Mr. Hardy deliberately challenges the comic association of "Ten Little Nigger Boys," and leaves us full of tragic sadness and foreboding. Over and over again in this volume we find him starting from some simple fact, occurrence or observation, and raising it by the force of his poetic genius into the universal and spiritual realm of poetry.

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How does that genius work? Not, assuredly (although lines of magical beauty are not few), by dressing up the object in verbal spangles or fine imagery.

From tides the lofty coastlands screen
Come smitings like the slam of doors,
Or hammerings on hollow floors,
As the swell cleaves through caves unseen.

It happened that, an hour after reading those lines, the reviewer took a walk along just such a lofty coastland as Mr. Hardy means, and listened to the waves breaking against the rocks and cleaving caves unseen. And the lines, so clear of all conventional romance, stirred him to pay homage once more to that obstinate determination to tell the truth which is one thing that draws Mr. Hardy's admirers back and back again to the fine security of his prose and poetry. This man will imitate nobody (though here and there, as in the last lines of his noble centenary poem on Shakespeare, his knowledge of the best English poetry peeps out); and he will never pretend. Hence it comes that he can use "prosaic" words, or homely words, like "jog," "gluck," "scrabble," "spuds," or dialect words like "wanzed," "deedily," and others, with perfect propriety in serious poems. Hence, too, it comes that little characteristic scraps of stiffness (which, however, seem to become fewer as this amazing veteran develops) like "the heather, that formed the common's drape," do not jar as they would in the work of a "prettier" poet.

***

This is not to say that Mr. Hardy's poetry has no music. The trouble to some of his readers is that it has so much that they cannot hear it all at once. For it is a new music, which Mr. Hardy has as truly made for himself out of the common stock of material as ever did Bach, or Beethoven, or Brahms. It is his own music, and no other poet's; and it can no more be truly enjoyed at a first hearing than can, say, a song by Strauss. To the student of rhythm and metre it is a fascinating occupation to go through and through these poems and search out the secrets of Mr. Hardy's purely personal use of dactyls, trochees (he is fond of both) and other bricks out of which the sound of poetry is built. And those who care little for such details would enjoy analysing the complicated metrical beauties of "The Voice of Things," or of the "Afterwards" which closes the volume on an exquisite note of wistfulness, or of "The Youth who Carried a Light":—

What became of that light? I wonder still its fate!
Was it quenched at its very apogee?
Did it struggle frail and frailer to a beam emaciate?
Did it thrive till matured in verity?
Or did it travel on, to be a new young dreamer's freight,
And thence on infinitely?

We who read Mr. Hardy's poems know that the right answer lies in the fourth of those lines. The light has thriven to maturity, because it has been carried with undeviating honesty and purpose. It is the light of intensity—intensity of vision, intensity of feeling—which has become a great creative force. It shines in every poem in this volume; in the little ditty of the robin, over which a child of five might laugh and shed tears; in the many wistful poems of regret for lost joys and friends; in the tender retrospects, the bitter tales of cruelty and waste, the occasional *macabre* fancies and the two or three outbursts of that colossal imagination which invented the celestial beings of "The Dynasts" to interpret the world's working. It makes all the poetry new, individual, vigorously sincere, and alive with inextinguishable vitality.

"The Need for Saving in Peace Time," by Mr. Hartley Withers (published by the National War Savings Committee, 2d. net.), is the first to be issued of the National Economy Series, which will attempt to deal in a lucid and readable manner with the economic principles underlying the teaching of the committee.

THOMAS HARDY

By LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE.

Many years ago, when Hardy published his first book of poems (like Meredith vaguely of a fine novelist, it was commonly held to be then), a smart young man reviewed it for a smart young paper in a single epigram, something like this: "Nature said to Hardy, 'You shall not be a poet.' Hardy said to Nature, 'I will.'" The smart young man is probably getting a little bald by now, and this particular specimen of his smartness looks decidedly foolish. Hardy to-day is not only the greatest of all English novelists; he is quite as evidently one of the most remarkable and individual of English poets. No doubt that smart young man accepted the ancient authority about poets being born, not made. Hardy, of course, like all the rest, was a born poet, but equally of course he had to make himself a poet as well. What Nature really said—not snappily, though; men like Thomas Hardy are not ordered about by Nature; they are advised—what Nature really said was: "Better get the novels done first."

The advice may have been a trifle reluctantly followed; it may have seemed rather like the common sense of every-day prudence. But it was mighty good advice for all that. The poet born in Hardy was such a subtle, complex, unexpected kind, that in order to make this poet—to express him, that is—nothing else would serve but a long and arduous training in all the energies and niceties of language, all the delicacies of psychology, all those fine associations we call symbolism. He had, in fact, in order completely to liberate the poet in him, to be a novelist first—but a novelist of a very special and noble quality. Now the poet is not quite liberated in the first two books of poems; that is what the smart young man—you may be easy about him, I have done with him now—so crudely perceived, like many others at that time. It is true that in Hardy's three later books of poems: "Time's Laughingstocks," "Satires of Circumstance," and "Moments of Vision," a good deal is included that was written a long time ago; but the really astonishing things in those books are the recent things, written when he had done with the art of fiction; and the more recent they are, the more astonishing, the more daring, the more unlike anything else in English poetry, both in theme and treatment.

I am not suggesting that Hardy, the novelist, was merely a preparation for Hardy, the poet. I simply mean that, taking for granted the powers he started off with, it is not quite so odd as it looks, this change over from one supreme mastery to another. It could hardly, at least, have happened the other way round. This is even clearer when we remember that colossal transition from fiction to lyrics, "The Dynasts." For now that we have the series before us, it seems almost what we might have expected, that the exquisite humanity and vigorous action of the novels should pass into that vast towering symbol of impossible destiny and suffering illusion, "The Dynasts"; and that again the unusual poetry somewhat turbidly dissolving the potent stuff of "The Dynasts," should pass into the later lyrics, with their fiery limpidity of quintessential character and fortune. Yes, it is easy to see the logic of all this now. But who, when it was half-way through, could have made a probable guess at the way it would go on?

I know nothing more astounding in literary history than this tripartite career of Hardy's. Three great men have each contributed to it their massive, audacious, imperturbable life work. There is the writer of fiction. Little need be said of him; he is the greatest of novelists. "Far from the Madding Crowd," "The Woodlanders," "The Mayor of Casterbridge," "The Return of the Native," "Tess," and "Jude the Obscure"—the shapely splendour of these, their wealth of tragic and humorous psychology, have at last raised fiction, the youngest of the arts, to the level of Beethoven's music, to say nothing of those lesser masterpieces "Two On a Tower," "The Trumpet-Major," and "Under the Greenwood Tree."

Then there is the author of "The Dynasts"; and he, I think, will be looked on as the dominating member of the Triple Alliance called Thomas Hardy. For the epic poem of "The Dynasts" is the great poem of our time; and you may match it with the greatest poems of any other time without belittling it. It is vision and symbolic action in the grand style.

Next, however, comes the most surprising person of the Hardy trinity—the lyrical poet. With two such achievements behind him as the Wessex novels and "The Dynasts," each big enough for one man's life work, he sets about a series of daring experiments in lyrical poetry; and succeeds almost at once in creating something quite unprecedented in English poetry, going on from one successful experiment to another, an insatiable pioneer. He uses themes no one else would think of using; he uses colloquialisms no one else would dare to use. Outwardly, it is as orthodox and demure as the most traditional poetry can be; but inside these manners it is more revolutionary than the work of the hottest head of the day. What will he do next?

The Daily News 4. 6. 19.

"Morning Post"
17.10.19

BOOKS OF THE DAY.

THOMAS HARDY AS POET.

COLLECTED POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY. 8s. 6d. net. Macmillan.

The poet, happily, is still in his Wessex, so that we can only call this volume definitive in the Geddesian sense. There may be yet, we may hope, some ears ungleaned in that English field, and there is besides "The Dynasts" to complete Mr. Hardy's poetical works. Nevertheless we have here enough to suggest at least an estimate of the richness of this poet's harvest gathered mainly from the chalk and loam of his native uplands. It is indeed an English harvest, a body of verse in the great English tradition, so that we say as we turn over the pages—here is Chaucer, and here Piers Plowman, and here are the goodly company of the ballad-makers, and here is a pentameter line that might have been in one of Shakespeare's sonnets; here, more seldom, is a gay little song of the sort one calls Caroline; here is the native humour, and once or twice the native sculduddery of Burns, here the twisted and difficult thought of Dr. Donne or Webster, or Meredith, or Browning, or that rare felicity in catching nature in a phrase to suggest Tennyson and Keats.

Mr. Hardy works in the tradition of English poetry. He has studied his craft under the English masters. He has worked hard and worked well. The volume is like a stone-mason's yard; we have experiments here and apprentice pieces. The poet has sometimes wrought hard and unsuccessfully to carve in flint. We have fantastic experiments in one rhyme: in one not altogether unsuccessful ballad, no less than twenty-nine lines rhyme upon the same word. It seems to us that Mr. Hardy must have begun as a ballad-maker. "The Peasant's Confession," for example, is an apprentice piece: its syncopated and condensed movement makes the reading painful. We feel the difficulty and stiffness with which it is produced. But later the poet catches the true freedom and expresses the true feeling of the great ballad. We may call Thomas Hardy one of the greatest of our ballad-writers. We know of nothing finer of its kind than the "Tramp-Woman's Tragedy," and "A Sunday Morning Tragedy" does not come much short of it. The first has a better flow and a more haunting melody; but the second has that concentration, that quintessence of weighty narrative by which we recognise the master of the ballad-form. The true lyric he is not so familiar in. There is the real singing note in "The Dark Eyed Gentleman"—as may be gathered from the opening line: "I pitched my day's leazings in Crimmercrock Lane." But even here Mr. Hardy is too intent on his story for the whole-hearted, full-throated manner of the true song-writer. Nevertheless he can write songs now and again, which might, and we hope will, be sung until Time and English come to an end in Wessex.

We hope we are past the time now when the critic asks for the poet's message. There are many messages here. As Mr. Hardy says in one of his own prefaces, "the road to a true philosophy in life seems to lie in humbly recording diverse readings of its phenomena as they are forced upon us by chance and change." To record an incident of Time in the light of Eternity is what genius does for us. We see into life here through a thousand windows—chiefly Wessex cottage panes of old grey and knotted glass. There is, for example, the heart of life, and of death also, in that poem beginning:

> William Dewy, Tranter Reuben, Farmer Ledlow late at plough, Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,
> And the Squire, and Lady Susan, lie in Mellstock Churchyard now!

But if there is one pervading mood which dwells with Thomas Hardy more than another it is that sense of the irony of life, which we find most elaborately expressed in "The Dynasts" and in one of the greatest of his novels, "Jude the Obscure." We find it is in the title of one collection of his poems, "Time's Laughing-Stocks." We are all Time's laughing-stocks he tells us—sooner or later Time has the laugh of all of us. And this mood becomes malignant in its bitterness—as, for example, in the story of women quarrelling over a grave, while the sexton looks on and explains to a stranger that "we moved the lot some nights ago." But—

. . . . as well cry over a new-laid drain
As anything else, to ease your pain.

By the way, we are under the impression—which may, however, be a trick of memory—that this poem has been changed, and spoilt in the changing, since it first appeared some years ago.

This sense of the malignancy of Fate does not always abide with our poet; yet in the gayest of his poems—and they are now and then gay—there is at least a passing shadow of the frailty and vicissitude of life and all things.

If we are to endeavour to estimate his achievement as a poet we are bound to admit that his furnace fire sometimes smoulders, and that there is a good deal of half-smelted metal among the gold. But of the pure and essential stuff of poetry, in almost every metre and mood, there is so much that it is churlish to find fault. And it might be said, also, that this is also in the tradition of our English poetry; Donne and Webster, for example, are among our very greatest, if quality of the best and not an average goodness be the test. Yet how much half-smelted metal lies around the pure gold of these two! There is, after all, as good an assay of gold to dross in this volume as we have any right to ask for. There is upon almost every page a phrase or a verse or a stanza of which we exclaim "that is of the stuff that outlasts monuments." Mr. Hardy must be placed among the greatest of our poets as among the greatest of our novelists.

"Daily Graphic"
17.10.19.

THOMAS HARDY'S POEMS.

A NEW ISSUE WHICH INCLUDES HIS WAR VERSES.

Poems of war and patriotism are included in Messrs. Macmillan's re-issue of Thomas Hardy's "Collected Poems" (8s. 6d. net), and the majority feature outstanding phases of the Great War. In December, 1914, he penned a moving appeal to America on behalf of the Belgian destitute, who "Seven millions stand Emaciate, in that ancient Delta-land." Previous to that he had visioned the expatriated Belgians in touching words. Fire and awing characterise the song of the soldiers, "Men Who March Away," and there are scathing lines based on Germany's imprecation, "O England, may God punish thee!" His "Call to National Service" is a trumpet call to the women and men:

> "Of palace, ploughshare, easel, counter, pen;
> That scareless, scathless, England still may stand."

In a large degree dramatic or personative in conception are the majority of the pieces which are printed in this new volume, but the author's illustrations which graced earlier editions are not now included. Many of the love lyrics are given, a set of country songs, satires of circumstance, poems of the past and the present and of pilgrimage, the favourite Wessex verses, and scores of miscellaneous compositions.

Like his prose, Hardy's poems are easy to understand, so homely is the language. In a few lines he limns a picture, or tells a story, or paints a portrait. The re-publication of the poems will be welcomed by thousands, especially as the production is in keeping with the valuable contents.

"The Outlook"
6.11.19.

HARDY THE POET.

Collected Poems. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 8s. 6d. net.

MANY must have first learned that Mr. Hardy was a poet when Lionel Johnson published, as an appendix to his study of Hardy's novels, that gallant old English ballad, "The Bride-night Fire." That was written in 1866, and first published in a magazine in 1875; the last poem dated in this collected edition belongs to the year 1917. Mr. Hardy's verse, contrary to the prevailing impression, does not belong altogether to the period when he gave up the writing of fiction, but covers pretty well the whole of his literary life; thus it is true the greater part of his poetic work, especially if one includes "The Dynasts," is subsequent to the writing of *Jude the Obscure*. It has much in common with the novels. There is the same sombre humour, the same excessive preoccupation with the cynical aspect of the graveyard—indeed, years before that American masterpiece was written Mr. Hardy had given us the spirit of *The Spon River Anthology* in many a modest poem; there is the same keen eye for natural beauties, the same almost invaluable heartache and a piety beside which the humanitarianism of modern and minor authors seems mere sentiment.

Mr. Hardy's poetic ancestors are evident. He is of the school of Crabbe, but has a wider outlook on life than that poet or than Barnes of Dorset. His affinity to Browning is plain enough in his method; but his actual handling of his subjects is so unlike Browning's, his view of pain and death so essentially different, that nothing can be gained by comparing the two. It may seem an odd judgment; but I am inclined to believe that in many ways Hardy the poet approximates more to Christina Rossetti than to any other English poet. Each of them has a profound melancholy, deeper than love, deeper at times than hate; just as some men will sacrifice anything for the sake of a joke, so Hardy will sacrifice anything for the sake of a tragedy. It will not be his fault if men and women are happy: he will show them precisely how unwarranted a thing happiness is. This is also Miss Rossetti's attitude; and it is scarcely modified by her deep and sincere religion, as sincere as Hardy's different yet similar faith, for she adopted a Christianity almost exclusively other-worldly, a faith that despised the world. Sometimes in form Hardy is reminiscent of Miss Rossetti—as in the poem, for instance, *A Broken Appointment*:—

> "You did not come,
> And marching Time drew on, and wore me numb—
> Yet less for loss of your dear presence there
> Than that I thus found lacking in your make
> That high compassion which can overbear (kind)
> Reluctance for pure loving-~~tenderness~~kindness' sake,
> Grieved I, when, as the hope hour strolled its sum,
> You did not come. k

"Aberdeen Daily Journal" 10.11.19.

"Pall Mall Gazette" 11.11.19.

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You love not me,
And love alone can lend you loyalty;
—I know and knew it. But, unto the store
Of human deeds divine in all but name,
Was it not worth a little hour or more
To add yet this: Once you, a woman, came
To soothe a time-torn man; even though it be
You love not me?"

The note of resigned sorrow is peculiarly characteristic of Hardy as of Miss Rossetti; and while one must not make the mistake of saddling the poet with the responsibilities of his characters, one is justified in deducing something from the choice of subjects which an author makes. When Mr. Hardy is glad or gay it is nearly always about either nature or something young; experience, for him, is inseparable from sorrow, and grief is only another word for growth. This is not at all inconsistent with a high courage in the face of disasters; often your sorrowful man makes the best champion, for what he does hold of value he holds passionately. Mr. Hardy's war poems showed a spirit and a beauty which do not usually mark war poetry, and we are glad to see again the fine *Men Who March Away*, and the splendid "In Time of the Breaking of Nations." Perhaps the chief gift Mr. Hardy has for us, is that he perpetually restores to a nation grown excessively urban the sense of the earth to which we belong. He is not as any of those younger men who have discovered and patronised rural life in the last twenty years; he has lived in the slow and certain beauty of the West, where a man knows better than to hurry, or to spend his life in a vain effort to learn how to waste time and money. Whether that ardent, unhasty life will survive much longer, whether it can battle with the illustrated papers and the cinematograph is uncertain. There are some who think that when the last villager has come to town, he will pass at the gates the last townsman going back to the land. However that may be, life in the country, even in Dorset or Cornwall, can never be quite what it was during the years covered by Mr. Hardy's art; of these years his novels and poems remain a remarkable monument, a work as noteworthy as any in English literature, and sure of appreciation as long as there are people who would know how the English peasant and farmer and squire lived, and what they thought. And the spirit of the countryside, its impatience with all but the stark simplicities of life, is expressed in "Afternoon Service at Mellstock (*circa* 1850)":—

"On afternoons of drowsy calm
We stood in the panelled pew,
Singing one-voiced a Tate-and-Brady psalm
To the tune of 'Cambridge New.'

We watched the elms, we watched the rooks,
The clouds upon the breeze,
Between the whiles of glancing at our books,
And swaying like the trees.

So mindless were those outpourings!—
Though I am not aware
That I have gained by subtle thought on things
Since we stood psalming there.

REVIEWS

THE POETRY OF MR. HARDY

COLLECTED POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY. Vol. I. (Macmillan. 8s. 6d. net.)

WE have read these poems of Thomas Hardy, read them not once, but many times. Many of them have already become part of our being; their indelible impress has given shape to dumb and striving elements in our soul; they have set free and purged mute, heart-devouring regrets. And yet, though this is so, the reading of them in a single volume, the submission to their movement with a like unbroken motion of the mind, gathers their greatness, their poignancy and passion, into one stream, submerging us and leaving us patient and purified.

There have been many poets among us in the last fifty years, poets of sure talent, and it may be even of genius, but no other of them has this compulsive power. The secret is not hard to find. Not one of them is adequate to what we know and have suffered. We have in our own hearts a new touchstone of poetic greatness. We have learned too much to be wholly responsive to less than an adamantine honesty of soul and a complete acknowledgment of experience. "Give us the whole," we cry, "give us the truth." Unless we can catch the undertone of this acknowledgment, a poet's voice is in our ears hardly more than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal.

Therefore we turn—some by instinct and some by deliberate choice—to the greatest; therefore we deliberately set Mr. Hardy among these. What they have, he has, and has in their degree—a plenary vision of life. He is the master of the fundamental theme; it enters into, echoes in, modulates and modifies all his particular emotions, and the individual poems of which they are the substance. Each work of his is a fragment of a whole—not a detached and arbitrarily severed fragment, but a unity which implies, calls for and in a profound sense creates a vaster and completely comprehensive whole. His reaction to an episode has behind and within it a reaction to the universe. An overwhelming endorsement descends upon his words: he traces them as with a pencil, and straightway they are graven in stone.

Thus his short poems have a weight and validity which sets them apart in kind from even the very finest work of his contemporaries. These may be perfect in and for themselves; but a short poem by Mr. Hardy is often perfect in a higher sense. As the lines of a diagram may be produced in imagination to contain within themselves all space, one of Mr. Hardy's most characteristic poems may expand and embrace all human experience. In it we may hear the sombre, ruthless rhythm of life itself—the dominant theme that gives individuation to the ripple of fragmentary joys and sorrow. Take "The Broken Appointment":

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You love not me?

On such a seeming fragment of personal experience lies the visible endorsement of the universe. The hopes not of a lover but of humanity are crushed beneath its rhythm.

Was the choice poet of the Island. Wisha!
You'ld go to the well up there to draw the water
And talk a spell, maybe, then come back to him
And he'ld have the poem for you clean and clever.
He had the wit. If only he'd had learning,
Mother of God! 'tis he would have been a poet!"

ROBIN FLOWER.

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"Morning Post"
17.10.19

BOOKS OF THE DAY.

THOMAS HARDY AS POET.

COLLECTED POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY. 8s. 6d. net. Macmillan.

The poet, happily, is still in his Wessex, so that we can only call this volume definitive in the Goddesian sense. There may be yet, we may hope, some ears ungleaned in that English field, and there is besides "The Dynasts" to complete Mr. Hardy's poetical works. Nevertheless we have here enough to suggest at least an estimate of the richness of this poet's harvest gathered mainly from the chalk and loam of his native uplands. It is indeed an English harvest, a body of verse in the great English tradition, so that we say as we turn over the pages—here is Chaucer, and here Piers Plowman, and here are the goodly company of the ballad-makers, and here is a pentameter line that might have been in one of Shakespeare's sonnets; here, more seldom, is a gay little song of the sort one calls Caroline; here is the native humour, and once or twice the native sculduddery of Burns, here the twisted and difficult thought of Dr. Donne or Webster, or Meredith, or Browning, or that rare felicity in catching nature in a phrase to suggest Tennyson and Keats.

Mr. Hardy works in the tradition of English poetry. He has studied his craft under the English masters. He has worked hard and worked well. The volume is like a stone-mason's yard; we have experiments here and apprentice pieces. The poet has sometimes wrought hard and unsuccessfully to carve in flint. We have fantastic experiments in one rhyme: in one not altogether unsuccessful ballad, no less than twenty-nine lines rhyme upon the same word. It seems to us that Mr. Hardy must have begun as a ballad-maker. "The Peasant's Confession," for example, is an apprentice piece: its syncopated and condensed movement makes the reading painful. We feel the difficulty and stiffness with which it is produced. But later the poet catches the true freedom and expresses the true feeling of the great ballad. We may call Thomas Hardy one of the greatest of our ballad-writers. We know of nothing finer of its kind than the "Tramp-Woman's Tragedy," and "A Sunday Morning Tragedy" does not come much short of it. The first has a better flow and a more haunting melody; but the second has that concentration, that quintessence of weighty narrative by which we recognise the master of the ballad-form. The true lyric he is not so familiar in. There is the real singing note in "The Dark Eyed Gentleman"—as may be gathered from the opening line: "I pitched my day's leazings in Crimmercrock Lane." But even here Mr. Hardy is too intent on his story for the whole-hearted, full-throated manner of the true song-writer. Nevertheless he can write songs now and again, which might, and we hope will, be sung until Time and English come to an end in Wessex.

We hope we are past the time now when the critic asks for the poet's message. There are many messages here. As Mr. Hardy says in one of his own prefaces, "the road to a true philosophy in life seems to lie in humbly recording diverse readings of its phenomena as they are forced upon us by chance and change." To record an incident of Time in the light of Eternity is what genius does for us. We see into life here through a thousand windows—chiefly Wessex cottage panes of old grey and knotted glass. There is, for example, the heart of life, and of death also, in that poem beginning:

> William Dewy, Tranter Reuben, Farmer Ledlow late at plough, Robert's kin, and John's, and Ned's,
> And the Squire, and Lady Susan, lie in Mellstock Churchyard now!

But if there is one pervading mood which dwells with Thomas Hardy more than another it is that sense of the irony of life, which we find most elaborately expressed in "The Dynasts" and in one of the greatest of his novels, "Jude the Obscure." We find it is in the title of one collection of his poems, "Time's Laughing-Stocks." We are all Time's laughing-stocks he tells us—sooner or later Time has the laugh of all of us. And this mood becomes malignant in its bitterness—as, for example, in the story of women quarrelling over a grave, while the sexton looks on and explains to a stranger that "we moved the lot some nights ago." But—

. . . . as well cry over a new-laid drain
As anything else, to ease your pain.

By the way, we are under the impression—which may, however, be a trick of memory—that this poem has been changed, and spoilt in the changing, since it first appeared some years ago.

This sense of the malignancy of Fate does not always abide with our poet; yet in the gayest of his poems—and they are now and then gay—there is at least a passing shadow of the frailty and vicissitude of life and all things.

If we are to endeavour to estimate his achievement as a poet we are bound to admit that his furnace fire sometimes smoulders, and that there is a good deal of half-smelted metal among the gold. But of the pure and essential stuff of poetry, in almost every metre and mood, there is so much that it is churlish to find fault. And it might be said, also, that this is also in the tradition of our English poetry: Donne and Webster, for example, are among our very greatest, if quality of the best and not an average goodness be the test. Yet how much half-smelted metal lies around the pure gold of these two! There is, after all, as good an assay of gold to dross in this volume as we have any right to ask for. There is upon almost every page a phrase or a verse or a stanza of which we exclaim "that is of the stuff that outlasts monuments." Mr. Hardy must be placed among the greatest of our poets as among the greatest of our novelists.

"Daily Graphic"
17.10.19.

THOMAS HARDY'S POEMS.

A NEW ISSUE WHICH INCLUDES HIS WAR VERSES.

Poems of war and patriotism are included in Messrs. Macmillan's re-issue of Thomas Hardy's "Collected Poems" (8s. 6d. net), and the majority feature outstanding phases of the Great War. In December, 1914, he penned a moving appeal to America on behalf of the Belgian destitute, who "Seven millions stand Emaciate, in that ancient Delta-land." Previous to that he had visioned the expatriated Belgians in touching words. Fire and swing characterise the song of the soldiers, "Men Who March Away," and there are scathing lines based on Germany's imprecation, "O England, may God punish thee!" His "Call to National Service" is a trumpet call to the women and men:

> "Of palace, ploughshare, easel, counter, pen;
> That scareless, scathless, England still may stand."

In a large degree dramatic or personative in conception are the majority of the pieces which are printed in this new volume, but the author's illustrations which graced earlier editions are not now included. Many of the love lyrics are given, a set of country songs, satires of circumstance, poems of the past and the present and of pilgrimage, the favourite Wessex verses, and scores of miscellaneous compositions.

Like his prose, Hardy's poems are easy to understand, so homely is the language. In a few lines he limns a picture, or tells a story, or paints a portrait. The re-publication of the poems will be welcomed by thousands, especially as the production is in keeping with the valuable contents.

"The Outlook"
6.11.19.

RICHES OR RUBBISH.*

IF Mr. Talbot is not ... his calculations, there is later ... unconverted wealth ... the war in the course ... the term waste shoul... dictionary as having ... science has eliminate... day is the forerunner ... and the cleanly hou... refuse does her coun... consuming money. ... make the fullest use ... in the middens. In ... has been a traditiona... mainly in obviously ... He neglected infinite... garnered. To the plo... credit of being the fi... profit out of the prin... for new. Not only ... refuse into national ... the waste matter of h... to herself, and resold ... priced chemicals and ...

Until the outbreak ... pay Germany many ... which we could have ... waste products of ind... the shortage of tonn... pelled our manufactur... which were not dep... upon ... The results were illuminating. Not only had they a pronounced effect in reducing the volume of imports, but they released an appreciable proportion of our reduced mercantile shipping.

In no direction was a more remarkable result achieved than in the salvage of fats and oils. Up to within recent years there was a prodigious waste of grease in every department of the national life. For instance, it is computed that the water used for domestic purposes in London alone every twenty-four hours contains 150,000 pounds of fat, which is lost down the drains, and which, if recovered, would represent a saving of a million sterling per annum. In pre-war days, however, only the soap-maker had any use for waste grease, and so plentiful were fats that there was no inducement to look outside the ordinary channels of supply. Then came the competition of margarine, and refuse fat began to have a market value. Soap and margarine were turned out from the same factories in about equal proportions. The consumption of raw material became enormous. One large firm of soap manufacturers, for instance, required 5,000 tons of fat per week. To-day it is sending forth 6,000 tons of soap and 4,000 tons of margarine each week. If the output of the many scores of similar factories is added together, it is not surprising that the coarsest grade of fat fetches £50 a ton, or that the extraction of fat from organic waste has become a profitable industry.

Grease, however, provides only one illustration. There is not a single ingredient of the rubbish-heap that cannot be turned to good account. To quote Mr. Talbot: "If we were to salvage all the rags entering into the domestic refuse of the nation we

"Aberdeen Daily Journal" 10.11.19.

"Pall Mall Gazette" 11.11.19.

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a sheet of paper on which as a boy of twelve I had written out the plan of a tour through France, from Havre to Marseilles, by boat. Every stage was worked out in detail, even to the spot at which I should halt for lunch, and as far as possible some place of greater interest was always reached by Saturday night; for I was piously upbrought, and it was only by a struggle with my conscience that I allowed myself to do an occasional ten miles on Sunday. Much water has flowed under the Pont Neuf since then, and I have never made that voyage in reality—partly because of the discovery that the Canal de Bourgogne contains seventy-five locks in thirty miles (I speak approximately, from a memory of long pre-Pelman date)—nor do I suppose I ever shall; and so, like the poet who wisely "never went to Mamble," I have been preserved from disillusion and can still cherish the memory of the voyage I never made.

L. F. SALZMAN.

NOVEMBER: THE MIST

The mist has made to-day seem weird and wan,
A ghost of all the winters that are gone.
Up on the common we can barely see
The green track at our feet, and silently
The vapour rolls on us from every side
So that the green track is our only guide.
We move as on an island; left and right
Hollows of mist whirl softly to our sight;
And seventeen miles away we hear a sound
Boom faintly, strangely in the quiet profound—
The voice of a great siren steadily
Calling and calling through the fog at sea.

I cannot bear that sound! We must go back
And leave the wandering mist and the green track:
We will do homage where the logs piled high
Blaze in their tiled shrine—then by-and-by
With friendly creatures comfortably to play—
The black cat and the golden and the grey.
Outside is Dream-peace, shifting, undefined,
With that strange, boding utterance behind.
Here is the Peace we in this life desire,
With love and laughter gathered round the fire;
And we forget the horror of fog at sea
While we are making our own toast for tea.

DOROTHEA SUMNER.

THE GREAT BLASKET: POETS

She sat there, the strong woman,
Dark, with swift eyes alert and laughter-lighted,
And gathering that wild flock,
This on her knee, that at her side, another
Crouched hiding elfin-eyed under tossed hair;
A calf unsteady-footed
And muzzled with a stocking snuffed and blundered,
And chickens hither and thither
Pecked on the floor, fluttered on loft and settle.
"Poets? And is it poets?"
She said: "The day has been when there were poets
Here on the Island, yonder on the mainland.
And my own father's father
Was the choice poet of the Island. Wisha!
You'ld go to the well up there to draw the water
And talk a spell, maybe, then come back to him
And he'ld have the poem for you clean and clever.
He had the wit. If only he'd had learning,
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"The Outlook"
17.11.19.

COLLECTED POEMS
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"Morning Post"
17.10.19

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quarrelling over a grave, while the sexton
looks on and explains to a stranger that
"we moved the lot some nights ago."
But—

The ruthlessness of the event is intensified in the motion of the poem till one can hear the even pad of destiny; and a moment comes when to a sense made eager by the strain of intense attention it seems to have been written by the destiny it records.

What is the secret of poetic power like this? We do not look for it in technique, though the technique of this poem is masterly. But the technique of "as the hope-hour stroked its sum" is of such a kind that we know as we read that it proceeds from a sheer compulsive force. For a moment it startles; a moment more and the echo of those very words is reverberant with accumulated purpose. They are pitiless as the poem; the sign of an ultimate obedience is upon them. Whence came the power that compelled it? Can the source be defined or indicated? We believe it can be indicated, though not defined. We can show where to look for the mystery, that in spite of our regard remains a mystery still. We are persuaded that almost on the instant that it was felt the original emotion of the poem was endorsed. Perhaps it came to the poet as the pain of a particular and personal experience; but in a little or a long while—creative time is not measured by days or years—it became, for him, a part of the texture of the general life. It became a manifestation of life, almost, nay wholly, in the sacramental sense, a veritable epiphany. The manifold and inexhaustible quality of life was focussed into a single revelation. A critic's words do not lend themselves to the necessary precision. We should need to write with exactly the same power as Mr Hardy when he wrote "the hope-hour stroked its sum," to make our meaning likewise inevitable. The word "revelation" is fertile in false suggestion; the creative act of power which we seek to elucidate is an act of plenary apprehension, by which one manifestation, one form of life, one experience is seen in its rigorous relation to all other and to all possible manifestations, forms and experiences. It is, we believe, the act which Mr. Hardy himself has tried to formulate in the phrase which is the title of one of his books of poems—"Moments of Vision."

Only those who do not read Mr. Hardy could make the mistake of supposing that on his lips such a phrase had a mystical implication. Between belief and logic lies a third kingdom, which the mystics and the philosophers alike are too eager to forget—the kingdom of art, no less the residence of truth than the two other realms, and to some, perhaps, more authentic even than they. Therefore when we expand the word "vision" in the phrase to "æsthetic vision" we mean, not the perception of beauty, at least in the ordinary sense of that ill-used word, but the apprehension of truth, the recognition of a complete system of valid relations incapable of logical statement. Such are the acts of unique apprehension which Mr. Hardy, we believe, implied by his title. In a "moment of vision" the poet recognizes in a single separate incident of life, life's essential quality. The uniqueness of the whole, the infinite multiplicity and variety of its elements, are manifested and apprehended in a part. Since we are here at work on the confines of intelligible statement, it is better, even at the cost of brutalizing a poem, to choose an example from the book that bears the mysterious name. The verses that follow come from "Near Lanivet, 1872." We choose them as an example of Mr. Hardy's method at less than its best, at a point at which the scaffolding of his process is visible.

There was a stunted handpost just on the crest,
Only a few feet high:
She was tired, and we stopped in the twilight-time for her rest,
At the crossways close thereby.

She leant back, being so weary, against its stem,
And laid her arms on its own,
Each open palm stretched out to each end of them,
Her sad face sideways thrown.

Her white-clothed form at this dim-lit cease of day
Made her look as one crucified
In my gaze at her from the midst of the dusty way,
And hurriedly "Don't," I cried.

I do not think she heard. Loosing thence she said,
As she stepped forth ready to go,
"I am rested now.—Something strange came into my head;
I wish I had not leant so!" . . .

And we dragged on and on, while we seemed to see
In the running of Time's far glass
Her crucified, as she had wondered if she might be
Some day.—Alas, alas!

Superstition and symbolism, some may say; but they mistakenly invert the order of the creative process. The poet's act of apprehension is wholly different from the lover's fear; and of this apprehension the chance-shaped crucifix is the symbol and not the cause. The concentration of life's vicissitude upon that white-clothed form was first recognized by a sovereign act of æsthetic understanding or intuition; the seeming crucifix supplied a scaffolding for its expression; it afforded a clue to the method of transposition into words which might convey the truth thus apprehended; it suggested an equivalence. The distinction may appear to be hair-drawn, but we believe that it is vital to the theory of poetry as a whole, and to an understanding of Mr. Hardy's poetry in particular. Indeed in it must be sought the meaning of another of his titles, "Satires of Circumstance," where the particular circumstance is neither typical nor fortuitous, but a symbol necessary to communicate to others the sense of a quality in life more largely and variously apprehended by the poet.

At the risk of appearing fantastic we will endeavour still further to elucidate our meaning. The poetic process is, we believe, twofold. The one part, the discovery of the symbol, the establishment of an equivalence, is what we may call poetic method. It is concerned with the transposition and communication of emotion, no matter what the emotion may be, for to poetic method the emotional material is, strictly, indifferent. The other part is æsthetic apprehension of significance, the recognition of the all in the one. This is a specifically poetic act, or rather the supreme poetic act. Yet it may be absent from poetry. For there is no necessary connection between poetic apprehension and poetic method. Poetic method frequently exists without poetic apprehension; and there is no reason to suppose that the reverse is not also true, for the recognition of greatness in poetry is probably not the peculiar privilege of great poets. We have here, at least, a principle of division between major and minor poetry.

Mr. Hardy is a major poet; and we are impelled to seek further and ask what it is that enables such a poet to perform this sovereign act of apprehension and to recognize the quality of the all in the quality of the one. We believe that the answer is simple. The great poet knows what he is looking for. Once more we speak too precisely, and falsely, being compelled to use the language of the kingdom of logic to describe what is being done in the kingdom of art. The poet, we say, knows the quality for which he seeks; but this knowledge is rather a condition than a possession of soul. It is a state of responsiveness rather than a knowledge of that to which he will respond. Yet it is knowledge inasmuch as the choice of that to which he will respond is determined by the condition of his soul. On the purity of that condition depends his greatness as a poet, and that purity in its turn depends upon his denial of no element of his profound experience. If he denies, he forgets, the synthesis—again the word is a parable—which must establish itself within him is fragmentary and abortive. The new event can wake but partial echoes in his soul or none at all; it can neither be received into, nor can it create

"Aberdeen Daily Journal" 10.11.19.

"Pall Mall Gazette" 11.11.19.

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te relation, and so it passes incommensurable from into forgetfulness.

Hardy stands high above all other modern poets by liberate purity of his responsiveness. The contagion world's slow stain has not touched him; from the held aloof from the general conspiracy to forget ich not only those who are professional optimists part. Therefore his simplest words have a vehe- and strangeness of their own:

It will have been:
Nor God nor Demon can undo the done,
Unsight the seen
Make muted music be as unbegun
Though things terrene
Groan in their bondage till oblivion supervene.

neither God nor Demon can do, men are tly at work to accomplish. Life itself rewards r their assiduity, for she scatters her roses chiefly paths of those who forget her thorns. But the et remembers both rose and thorn; and it is his power to remember them otherwise than

fitting, then, and to some senses inevitable, that dy should have crowned his work as a poet in his a series of love poems that are unique for power on in even the English language. This late and flowering has no tinge of miracle; it has sprung om the main-stem of Mr. Hardy's poetic growth. eteris Vestigia Flammæ" is distilled the quint- the power that created the Wessex Novels and asts"; all that Mr. Hardy has to tell us of life, of the truth that he has apprehended, is in these d no poet since poetry began has apprehended more. *Sunt lacrimæ rerum.* J. M. M.

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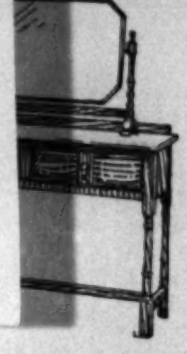

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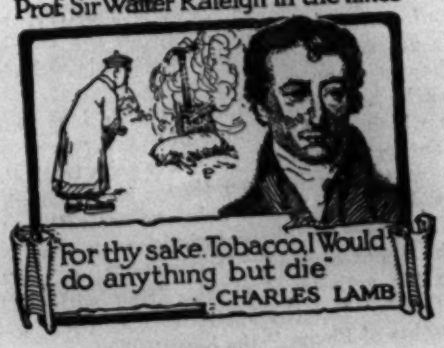

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"Nothing Poet"

17.10.19

BOOKS OF THE DAY.

THOMAS HARDY AS POET.

COLLECTED POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY.

. . . . as well cry over a new-laid drain
As anything else, to ease your pain.

By the way, we are under the impression —which may, however, be a trick memory—that this poem has been ch and spoilt in the changing, since it appeared some years ago.

The poe
so that w
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is a gay litt
Caroline; he
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thought of D
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felicity in cat
suggest Tenny
Mr. Hardy
English poetry
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We have faute
rhyme: in one
ballad, no less
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us that Mr. Ha
a ballad-maker.
fession," for ex
piece: its syn
movement makes
feel the difficulty
it is produced. I
the true freedom
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Thomas Hardy or
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of its kind than
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Tragedy" does no
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haunting melody;
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master of the balla
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man"—as may be
opening line: "I
ings in Crimmercr
here Mr. Hardy is
for the whole-h
manner of the true
theless he can write
which might, and
until Time and En
in Wessex.

We hope we are pa
the critic asks for
There are many mes
Hardy says in one
"the road to a tru
seems to lie in humb
readings of its phen
forced upon us by c
To record an incident
of Eternity is what
We see into life here
windows—chiefly Wess
old grey and knotted
example, the heart of
also, in that poem beg
William Dewy, Tranter
low late at plough, Ro
and Ned's,
And the Squire, and Lad
stock Churchyard now

But if there is one
which dwells with Tho
than another it is that
of life, which we find m
pressed in "The Dynast
the greatest of his novels, "Jude the Obscure." We find it is in the title of one collection of his poems, "Time's Laughing-Stocks." We are all Time's laughing-stocks he tells us—sooner or later Time has the laugh of all of us. And this mood becomes malignant in its bitterness—as, for example, in the story of women quarrelling over a grave, while the sexton looks on and explains to a stranger that "we moved the lot some nights ago." But—

1148 THE ATHENÆUM NOVEMBER

The ruthlessness of the event is intensified in the motion of the poem till one can hear the even pad of destiny; and a moment comes when to a sense made eager by the strain of intense attention it seems to have been written by the destiny it records.

What is the secret of poetic power like this? We do not look for it in technique, though the technique of this poem is masterly. But the technique of "as the hope-hour stroked its sum" is of such a kind that we know as we read that it proceeds from a sheer compulsive force. For a moment it startles; a moment more and the echo of those very words is reverberant with accumulated purpose. They are pitiless as the poem; the sign of an ultimate obedience is upon them. Whence came the power that compelled it? Can the source be defined or indicated? We believe it can be indicated, though not defined. We can show where to look for the mystery, that in spite of our regard remains a mystery still. We are persuaded that almost on the instant that it was felt the original emotion of the poem was endorsed. Perhaps it came to the poet as the pain of a particular and personal experience; but in a little or a long while—creative time is not measured by days or years—it became, for him, a part of the texture of the general life. It became a manifestation of life, almost, nay wholly, in the sacramental sense, a veritable epiphany. The manifold and inexhaustible quality of life was focussed into a single revelation. A critic's words do not lend themselves to the necessary precision. We should need to write with exactly the same power as Mr Hardy when he wrote "the hope-hour stroked its sum," to make our meaning likewise inevitable. The word "revelation" is fertile in false suggestion; the creative act of power which we seek to elucidate is an act of plenary apprehension, by which one manifestation, one form of life, one experience is seen in its rigorous relation to all other and to all possible manifestations, forms and experiences. It is, we believe, the act which Mr. Hardy himself has tried to formulate in the phrase which is the title of one of his books of poems—"Moments of Vision."

Only those who do not read Mr. Hardy could make the mistake of supposing that on his lips such a phrase had a mystical implication. Between belief and logic lies a third kingdom, which the mystics and the philosophers alike are too eager to forget—the kingdom of art, no less the residence of truth than the two other realms, and to some, perhaps, more authentic even than they. Therefore when we expand the word "vision" in the phrase to "æsthetic vision" we mean, not the perception of beauty, at least in the ordinary sense of that ill-used word, but the apprehension of truth, the recognition of a complete system of valid relations incapable of logical statement. Such are the acts of unique apprehension which Mr. Hardy, we believe, implied by his title. In a "moment of vision" the poet recognizes in a single separate incident of life, life's essential quality. The uniqueness of the whole, the infinite multiplicity and variety of its elements, are manifested and apprehended in a part. Since we are here at work on the confines of intelligible statement, it is better, even at the cost of brutalizing a poem, to choose an example from the book that bears the mysterious name. The verses that follow come from "Near Lanivet, 1872." We choose them as an example of Mr. Hardy's method at less than its best, at a point at which the scaffolding of his process is visible.

There was a stunted handpost just on the crest,
Only a few feet high:
She was tired, and we stopped in the twilight-time for her rest,
At the crossways close thereby.

She leant back, being so weary, against its stem,
And laid her arms on its own,
Each open palm stretched out to each end of them,
Her sad face sideways thrown.

HENÆUM NOVEMBER

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a poet, and that purity in its turn depends upon his de
no element of his profound experience. If he dem
forgets, the synthesis—again the word is a parable—
must establish itself within him is fragmentary and
The new event can wake but partial echoes in his soul
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of English Prosody that, among the do
most undulating and diverse study,
to dethrone the iamb from its almost universal
place as the staple foot of English, and to s
trochee, was by no means the least passiona
by its sectaries. This tendency, as a tend
no means "new." It is an almost inevita
of the endeavour to identify, or at least t
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who make much of Gildon might perhaps t
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is at any rate a constant result, if it is n
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it to blank verse, and, to most other prosod
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ence," in the old language of the duello.
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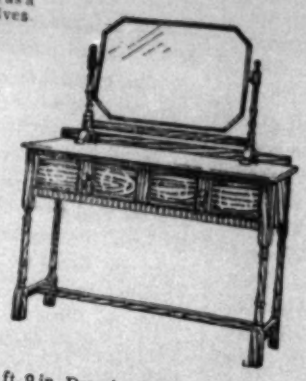

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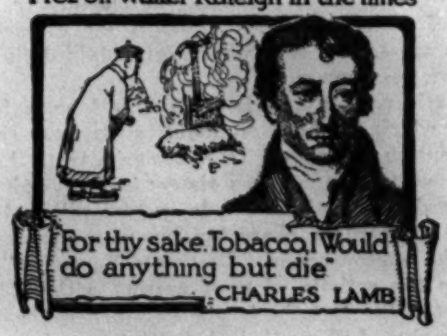

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Reviews.

OUR GREAT POET.

"Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy." Vol. I. (Macmillan. 8s. 6d. net.)

One meets fairly often with the critical opinion that Hardy's poetry is essentially a parergon. It is admitted on all sides that his poetry has curious merits of its own, but it is held to be completely subordinate to his main work, and those who, like the present writer, maintain that it must be considered as having equal standing with his prose, are not seldom treated as guilty of paradox and preciousness.

We are inclined to wonder, as we review the situation, whether those of the contrary persuasion are not allowing themselves to be impressed primarily by mere bulk, and arguing that a man's chief work must necessarily be what he has done most of; and we feel that some such supposition must be made to explain what appears to us as a visible reluctance to allow Hardy's poetry a clean impact upon the critical sensibility. It is true that we have ranged against us critics of real distinction, such as Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie and Mr. Robert Lynd, and that it may savor of actual impertinence to suggest that the case could have been unconsciously pre-judged in their minds when they addressed themselves to Hardy's poetry. Nevertheless, we find some significance in the fact that both these critics are of such an age that when they came to years of discretion the Wessex Novels were in existence as a *corpus*. There, before their eyes, was a monument of literary work having a unity unlike that of any contemporary author. The poems appeared only after they had laid the foundations of their judgment. For them Hardy's work was done. Whatever he might subsequently produce was an interesting, but to criticism an otiose appendix to his prose achievement.

It happens therefore that to a somewhat younger critic the perspective may be different. By the accident of years it would appear to him that Hardy's poetry was no less a *corpus* than his prose. They would be extended equally and [illegible], and he might find, in total innocence of preciousness and paradox, that the poetry would yield up to him on occasion essential quality of perfume not less essential than any that he could extract from the prose.

This is, as we see it, the case with ourselves. We discover all that our elders discover in Hardy's novels; we see more than they in his poetry. In our minds it exists superbly in its own right; it is not lifted into significance by the glorious substructure of the novels. They also are complete in themselves. We recognize the relation between the achievements, and discern that they are the work of a single mind; but they are separate works, having separate and unique excellences. The one is only approximately explicable in terms of the other. We are inclined, therefore, to attach a signal importance to what has always seemed to us the most interesting sentence in "Who's Who?"—namely, that in which Hardy confesses that in 1868 he was compelled—that is his own word—to give up writing poetry for prose.

For Hardy's poetic gift is not a late and freakish flowering. In this wonderful volume into which has been gathered all his poetical work with the exception of "The Dynasts," are pieces bearing the date 1866 which display an astonishing mastery, not merely of technique, but of the essential content of great poetry. Nor are such pieces exceptional. Granted that Hardy has retained only the finest of his early poetry, still there are a dozen poems of 1866-7 which belong either entirely or in part to the category of major poetry. Take, for instance, "Neutral Tones":—

> "We stood by a pond that winter day,
> And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,
> And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;
> —They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.
>
> "Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
> Over tedious riddles ~~long~~ solved years ago;
> And some ~~winds~~ words played between us to and fro
> On which lost the more by our love.
>
> "The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing
> Alive enough to have strength to die;
> And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
> Like an ominous bird a-wing. . . .
>
> "Since then keen lessons that love deceives
> And ~~tings~~ wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
> Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree
> And a pond edged with grayish leaves."

That was written in 1867. The date of "Desperate Remedies," Hardy's first novel, was 1871. "Desperate Remedies" may have been written some years before. It makes no difference to the astonishing contrast between the immaturity of the novel and the maturity of the poem. It is surely impossible in the face of such a juxtaposition then to deny that Hardy's poetry exists in its own individual right, and not as a curious simulacrum of his prose.

These early poems have other points of deep interest, of which one of the chief is in a sense technical. One can trace a quite definite influence of Shakespeare's sonnets in his language and imagery. The four sonnets "She to Him" (1866) are full of echoes, as

> "Numb as a vane that cankers on its point
> True to the wind that kissed ere canker came."

or this from another sonnet of the same year:—

> "As common chests encasing wares of price
> Are borne with tenderness through halls of state."

Yet no one reading the sonnets of these years can fail to mark the impress of an individual personality. The effect is, at times, curious and impressive in the extreme. We almost feel that Hardy is bringing some physical compulsion to bear on Shakespeare and forcing him to say something that he does not want to say. Of course, it is merely a curious tweak of the fancy; but there comes to us in such lines as the following an insistent vision of two youths of an age, the one masterful, the other indulgent, and carrying out his companion's firm suggestion:—

> "Remembering mine the loss is, not the blame
> That Sportsman Time rears but his brood to kill,
> Knowing me in my soul the very same—
> One who would die to spare you touch of ill!—
> Will you not grant to old affection's claim
> The hand of friendship down Life's sunless hill?"

But, fancies aside, the effect of these early poems is [illegible]

> "Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain
> And dicing time for gladness ~~daily~~ a moan . . .
> These purblind Doomsters had as readily ~~drown~~ strown
> Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain."

and the technique has the mark of mastery, a complete economy of statement which produces the conviction that the words are saying only what poet ordained they should say, neither less nor more.

The early years were followed by the long period of the novels, in which, we have no doubt, poetry was actually not in intention a parergon. It is the grim truth that poetry cannot be written in between times; and, though we have hardly any dates on which to rely, we are willing to believe that few of Hardy's characteristic poems were written between the appearance of "Desperate Remedies" and his farewell to the activity of novel-writing with "The Well-Beloved" (1897). But the few dates which we have tell us that "Thoughts of Phena," the beautiful poem beginning

> "Not a line of her writing have I,
> Not a thread of her hair . . . ,"

which reaches forward to the amazing love poems of 1912-13, was written in 1890.

Whether the development of Hardy's poetry was concealed or visible during the period of the novels, development there was into a maturity so overwhelming that by its touchstone the poetical work of his famous contemporaries appears singularly jejune and false. But, though by the accident of social conditions—for that Hardy waited till 1898 to publish his first volume of poems is more a social than an artistic fact—it is impossible to follow out the phases of his poetical progress with the detail we would desire, it is impossible not to recognize that the mature poet Hardy is of the same poetical substance as the young poet of the 'sixties. The attitude is unchanged; the modifications of the theme of "crass casualty" leave its central asseveration unchanged. There are restatements, enlargements of perspective, a slow and forceful expansion of the personal into the universal, but the truth once recognized is never suffered for a moment to

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be hidden or mollified. Only a superficial logic would point, for instance, to his

"Wonder if Man's consciousness
Was a mistake of God's,"

as a denial of "casualty." To envisage an accepted truth from a new angle, to turn it over and over again in the mind in the hope of finding some aspect which might accord with a large and general view is the inevitable movement of any mind that is alive and not dead. To say that Hardy has finally discovered unity may be paradoxical; but it is true. The harmony of the artist is not as the harmony of the preacher or the philosopher. Neither would grant, neither would understand the nature of the profound acquiescence that lies behind "Adonais" or the "Ode to the Grecian Urn." Such acquiescence has no moral quality, as morality is even now understood, nor any logical compulsion. It does not stifle anger nor deny anguish; it turns no smiling face upon unsmiling things; it is not puffed up with the resonance of futile heroics. It accepts the things that are as the necessary basis of artistic creation. This unity which comes of the instinctive refusal in the great poet to deny experience, and subdues the self into the whole as part of that which is not denied, is to be found in every corner of Hardy's mature poetry It gives, as it alone can really give, to personal emotion what is called the impersonality of great poetry. We feel it as a sense of background, a conviction that a given poem is not the record, but the culmination of an experience, and that the experience of which it is the culmination is far larger and more profound than the one which it seems to record.

At the back of great poetry lies an all-embracing realism, an adequacy to all experience, a refusal of the merely personal in exultation or dismay. Take the contrast between Rupert Brooke's deservedly famous lines: "There is some corner of a foreign field . . ." and Hardy's "Drummer Hodge":—

"Yet portion of that unknown plain
Will Hodge for ever be;
His homely Northern heart and brain
Grow to some Southern tree,
And strange-eyed constellations reign
His stars eternally."

We know which is the truer. Which is the more beautiful? Is it not Hardy? And which (strange question) is the more consoling, the more satisfying, the more acceptable? Is it not Hardy? There is sorrow, but it is the sorrow of the spheres. And this, not the apparent anger and dismay of a self's discomfiture, is the quality of greatness in Hardy's poetry. The Hardy of the love poems of 1912-13 is not a man giving way to memory in poetry; he is a great poet uttering the cry of the universe. That is not rhetoric. A vast range of acknowledged experience returns to weight each syllable; it is the quality of life that is vocal, gathered into a moment of time with a vista of years:—

"Ignorant of what there is flitting here to see,
The waked birds preen and the seals flop lazily,
Soon you will have, Dear, to vanish from me,
For the stars close their shutters and the Dawn whitens hazily.
Trust me, I mind not, though Life lours
The bringing me here; nay, bring me here again!
I am just the same as when
Our days were a joy and our paths through flowers."

...tude to life has never essentially varied. It is a pitiable futility, and all our endeavour mummery. We may laugh at it, but life defeats us in the end, and rejects us without remorse. Hardy's whole philosophy is summed up in the poem, "To Life," belonging to "Poems of the Past and Present":—

O Life with the sad seared face,
I weary of seeing thee,
And thy draggled cloak, and thy hobbling pace,
And thy too-forced pleasantry!

I know what thou would'st tell
Of Death, Time, Destiny—
I have known it long, and know, too, well
What it all means for me.

But canst thou not array
Thyself in rare disguise,
And feign like truth, for one mad day,
That Earth is Paradise?

I'll tune me to the mood,
And mumm with thee till eve,
And maybe what as interlude
I feign, I shall believe!

This is the veritable Hardy, establishing him in the authentic line of descent from the blithe-sad songsters of Elizabethan days.

...n.
...kespeare could sing "Come ...ath"—the sweetest dirge ever ...d "O Mistress Mine"—the love- ...e-songs—so Hardy can give us ... the sad scared face" and ...er":—
...e's coming.
...er as she now, O,
... anyhow, O,
...y's husbandry!
...d a gilt chair were mine,
...ers of hair were mine,
...ses for hair were mine
...ivory!
...g Her" is almost the sole bright ...s lyrical semi-darkness. A few ... we are obscured with the "The Duel" and shuddering at ... of "The Statue of Liberty."
... is Hardy's tense, even more ... Shakespeare's; at best a pre- ...d by ghosts and wraiths, phan- ...sombre, more world-wise than ...agore's "Hungry Stones"; at ...ure of oblivion for the ghosts and —
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...d "to Love," or the "Song of ...Valenciennes," or "The Ser- ...ng," or the exquisite "Julie-
...ow 'a would dance!
...estring did but sound
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...ound and round.
...les.
... ballads of battle and of love, and ... dramatic effect, all in the true ...le—the style of the storyteller ...late winter's tales and summer's ...—but space prohibits more than ...ing mention. "He Abjures ...h its universal eye for immanent ...e dignified daring of "Panthers"; ...l probability of the "Satires of ...nce"; the human sympathy and ...at pervade "To an Unborn ...ild"; the aery vision of "The ...he Slain"; the worldly wisdom ...s and Architect"; all are aspects ...verse, all-regarding and much- ...ding poet, who asks nothing ...n that, after his death, people ... he loved all lovely things. He ...gs in their coldest perspective ...s Browning—"Man, bird, beast, ...ast, bird, man"):—
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... modern rendering of the Greek ...All passes," and Hardy's way of ...th Shakespeare, "the rest is

A. K.

BOOKS OF THE MOMENT

OUR TRAGEDIAN.

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Mr. Hardy may not be the absolute creator of the form of dramatic poetry which he practises, but he has developed it both in range and method. The strength of his compression and his skill in finishing upon key lines which throw the whole of a piece into backward illumination and perspective are very great qualities indeed. To speak of his sincerity is commonplace, but the sure and subtle art with which it is allied will be appreciated for the first time by many of those who read this volume steadily and read it whole.

66

"Nothing Poet"

17.10.19

BOOKS OF THE DAY.

THOMAS HARDY AS POET.

COLLECTED POEMS OF THOMAS H[ARDY]

Rev[iew]

OUR GREAT [illegible]

"Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy. [illegible] (Macmillan. 8s. 6d. net.)

ONE meets fairly often with the critical opinion that Hardy's poetry is essentially a parergon. It is admitted on all sides that his poetry has curious merits of its own, but it is held to be completely subordinate to his main work, and those who, like the present writer, maintain that it must be considered as having equal standing with his prose, are not seldom treated as guilty of paradox and preciousness.

We are inclined to wonder, as we review the situation, whether those of the contrary persuasion are not allowing themselves to be impressed primarily by mere bulk, and arguing that a man's chief work must necessarily be what he has done most of; and we feel that some such supposition must be made to explain what appears to us as a visible reluctance to allow Hardy's poetry a clean impact upon the critical sensibility. It is true that we have ranged against us critics of real distinction, such as Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie and Mr. Robert Lynd, and that it may savor of actual impertinence to suggest that the case could have been unconsciously pre-judged in their minds when they addressed themselves to Hardy's poetry. Nevertheless, we find some significance in the fact that both these critics are of such an age that when they came to years of discretion the Wessex Novels were in existence as a *corpus*. There, before their eyes, was a monument of literary work having a unity unlike that of any contemporary author. The poems appeared only after they had laid the foundations of their judgment. For them Hardy's work was done. Whatever he might subsequently produce was an interesting, but to criticism an otiose appendix to his prose achievement.

It happens therefore that to a somewhat younger critic the perspective may be different. By the accident of years it would appear to him that Hardy's poetry was no less a *corpus* than his prose. They would be extended equally and ~~[illegible] precious-ness and paradox~~, that the poetry would yield up to him on occasion essential quality of perfume not less essential than any that he could extract from the prose.

This is, as we see it, the case with ourselves. We discover all that our elders discover in Hardy's novels; we see more than they in his poetry. In our minds it exists superbly in its own right; it is not lifted into significance by the glorious substructure of the novels. They also are complete in themselves. We recognize the relation between the achievements, and discern that they are the work of a single mind; but they are separate works, having separate and unique excellences. The one is only approximately explicable in terms of the other. We are inclined, therefore, to attach a signal importance to what has always seemed to us the most interesting sentence in "Who's Who?"—namely, that in which Hardy confesses that in 1868 he was compelled—that is his own word—to give up writing poetry for prose.

For Hardy's poetic gift is not a late and freakish flowering. In this wonderful volume into which has been gathered all his poetical work with the exception of "The Dynasts," are pieces bearing the date 1866 which display an astonishing mastery, not merely of technique, but of the essential content of great poetry. Nor are such pieces exceptional. Granted that Hardy has retained only the finest of his early poetry, still there are a dozen poems of 1866-7 which belong either entirely or in part to the category of major poetry. Take, for instance, "Neutral Tones":—

"We stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;
—They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

"Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
solved years/ Over tedious riddles ~~long~~ ago;
words/ And some ~~winds~~ played between us to and fro
On which lost the more by our love,

[illegible] development of Hardy's poetry was [illegible] concealed or visible during the period of the novels, developme[nt] there was into a maturity so overwhelming that by its touch[stone] the poetical work of his famous contemporaries appear[s] singularly jejune and false. But, though by the accident [of] social conditions—for that Hardy waited till 1898 to publish his first volume of poems is more a social than an artistic fact—it is impossible to follow out the phases of his poetical progress with the detail we would desire, it is impossible not to recognize that the mature poet Hardy is of the same poetical substance as the young poet of the 'sixties. The attitude is unchanged; the modifications of the theme of "crass casualty" leave its central asseveration unchanged. There are restatements, enlargements of perspective, a slow and forceful expansion of the personal into the universal, but the truth once recognized is never suffered for a moment

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ROBERT HICHENS

"Aberdeen Daily Journal" 10.11.19.

THOMAS HARDY.

The Poet of the World's Twilight.

[redacted] curiosity [redacted] novelist should be [redacted] writer of poetry [redacted] Thomas Hardy, who [redacted] wrote verse be[fore] [redacted] fiction, yet he was [redacted] verses were [redacted] Since [redacted] when he completed "The [redacted] has been a poet; the novelist [redacted] left behind; the author who, in [redacted]," "Jude," "The Mayor of Casterbridge," "Under the Greenwood Tree," "The Well-Beloved," and many other romances, has enriched the English language and its human philosophy with a glowing store of beauty and wisdom, turned to poetry as the vehicle of expression, and has since presented the world with six volumes of verse, composed at various times between 1860 and to-day, and ranking in the mass with the finest work of the great Victorians, Browning, Tennyson, Swinburne, Arnold, Meredith, Rossetti, and Morris. An astonishing achievement.

Those who know Hardy—who are not merely on terms of acquaintance with him—must have experienced the oppressive sense of gloom that always broods over his pages. In "Far from the Madding Crowd" we seem to become puny little creatures wandering aimlessly in a dark valley overhung with ominous thunderclouds—in a half-light as it were. The impression persists through all his works, and even in "Tess," "Under the Greenwood Tree," or "A Pair of Blue Eyes," the light is ever that of early gloaming; at rare moments we seem to catch a glimpse of sun suffusing the distant sky, but ere we can reach a vantage-point to view it wholly it has vanished from sight utterly. Yet the oppression has all the fascination of delight that satiates not.

The Lyrics.

His poems conform to the rule. Messrs Macmillan have performed a gracious service to all Hardy-lovers by the publication of his poems, in two volumes at 8s 6d per voldme—"Collected Poems" and "The Dynasts"—of which the former is now before us. The utility of such a collection is that we can wander and ramble, at will and at leisure, from one year's garden to the garden of another year, with the sense of continuity unimpaired; gratifying likes and dislikes by smelling one rare flower or passing by some forbidding plant, from confine to confine of the poetic demesne of a lifetime. We are in the same twilight that looms over the novels, similarly grasped like insects in the careless and unsentient hand of a thoughtless Fate. Whereas Anatole France maintains that the soul is not immortal but eternal, Hardy deems it immortal only in so long as its remembrance persists in the minds of living persons:—

A Shade but in its mindful ones
Has immortality;
By living, me you keep alive,
By dying you slay me.

Not a comforting religion certainly, but not here to be controverted.

From youth to age, Thomas Hardy's attitude to life has never essentially varied. It is a pitiable futility, and all our endeavour mummery. We may laugh at it, but life defeats us in the end, and rejects us without remorse. Hardy's whole philosophy is summed up in the poem, "To Life," belonging to "Poems of the Past and Present":—

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And feign like truth, for one mad day,
That Earth is Paradise?

I'll tune me to the mood,
And mumm with thee till eve,
And maybe what as interlude
I feign, I shall believe!

This is the veritable Hardy, establishing him in the authentic line of descent from the blithe-sad songsters of Elizabethan days.

Dual Passion.

As Shakespeare could sing "Come Away, Death"—the sweetest dirge ever penned—and "O Mistress Mine"—the loveliest of love-songs—so Hardy can give us "Life with the sad seared face" and "Timing Her":—

Lelage's coming,
Nearer as she now, O,
End anyhow, O,
To-day's husbandry!
Would a gilt chair were mine,
Slippers of vair were mine,
Brushes for hair were mine
Of ivory!

But "Timing Her" is almost the sole bright relief to this lyrical semi-darkness. A few pages, and we are obsessed with the cynicism of "The Duel" and shuddering at the horrors of "The Statue of Liberty."

The past is Hardy's tense, even more than it was Shakespeare's; at best a present peopled by ghosts and wraiths, phantoms more sombre, more world-wise than those of Tagore's "Hungry Stones"; at worst a future of oblivion for the ghosts and the quick:—

I have lived with Shades so long,
And talked to them so oft,
Since forth from cot and croft
I went mankind among,
That sometimes they
In their dim style
Will pause a while
To hear my say.

Scattered throughout the book are glorious songs and lilts, spontaneous and free. Take "The Bullfinches":—

Brother Bulleys, let us sing
From the dawn till evening!
For we know not that we go not
When the day's pale pinions fold
Where those be that sang of old;

or "I Said to Love," or the "Song of Hope," "Valenciennes," or "The Sergeant's Song," or the exquisite "Julie-Jane":—

Dance; how 'a would dance!
If a fiddlestring did but sound
She would hold out her coats, give a slanting glance,
And go round and round.

Ballad Tales.

There are ballads of battle and of love, and ballads of dramatic effect, all in the true Hardy style—the style of the storyteller who can relate winter's tales and summer's tales too—but space prohibits more than their passing mention. "He Abjures Love," with its universal eye for immanent beauty; the dignified daring of "Panthera"; the cynical probability of the "Satires of Circumstance"; the human sympathy and pathos that pervade "To an Unborn Pauper Child"; the aery vision of "The Souls of the Slain"; the worldly wisdom of "Heiress and Architect"; all are aspects of this diverse, all-regarding and much-comprehending poet, who asks nothing better than that, after his death, people should say he loved all lovely things. He ranks things in their coldest perspective (just as says Browning—"Man, bird, beast, are but beast, bird, man"):—

I speak as one who plumbs
Life's dim profound,
One who at length can sound
Clear views and certain.
But—after love what comes?
A scene that lours,
A few sad vacant hours
And then, the Curtain.

Which is a modern rendering of the Greek proverb, "All passes," and Hardy's way of saying with Shakespeare, "the rest is silence."

A. K.

"Bell Tell Graphic" 11.11.19.

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THE IRISH STATESMAN

November 15, 1919

POETIZING AMONG THE TOMBS

COLLECTED POEMS. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 12s. 6d.

Mr. Thomas Hardy occupied himself quite early in life with the writing of verses; yet it is only in quite recent years that he has won his present high reputation as a poet. Some of the pieces in this new "collected" volume, "Lyrical, Narratory, Reflective," were written in the sixties—at a date when Mr. Yeats, Mr. Kipling and other poets, who have lived long enough to experience fashion's fickleness, were still in their cradles. Of that fickleness Mr. Hardy himself has had little experience. His greatness as a novelist has for long been all but unquestioned; and the recent action of the younger critical opinion of England in placing him at the head of living poets seems to have gone unchallenged. Perhaps, on the appearance of this new volume of over 500 pages, with its masses of short poems, the value of the work in verse of this master of letters will become a matter of serious debate. The present writer looks forward to such debate, for to speak frankly, he has always thought that the exaltation of Mr. Hardy into a great poet represents one of the most ill-considered verdicts of our times. How difficult it is to believe that the most ardent admirers of Mr. Hardy, on reading his verse for the first time, can have received a thrill comparable to that which the devotees of Swinburne, of Meredith, of Yeats, and even of Rudyard Kipling, have reported. There is a certain charm of atmosphere in Hardy's work, no doubt, poetic sensibility, and a sincere expression of a prevailing mood; but of the thing that is called inspiration, little trace.

Yet to several of the poems in this book the reader will turn more than once for the sake of something that is not easy to define. A Christmas Eve poem, "The Oxen," has been righthtly admired. Here for once Mr. Hardy hits off the "pathos" of an atheism that is conjoined with a veneration for all that is old, traditional, ghostly—

> We pictured the meek, mild creatures where
> They dwelt in their strawy pen,
> Nor did it occur to one of us there
> To doubt they were kneeling then.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> . . . Yet, I feel,
> If someone said on Christmas eve
> "Come see the oxen kneel
> In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
> Our childhood used to know,"
> I should go with him in the gloom,
> Hoping it might be so.

Hardy's cheerfulness never breaks through his philosophy to a greater extent than that; but it is a curious psychological fact that the worried philosopher, who hardly ever ceases to harp on his inability to discern any high ideal ends in life, is most at home in churches—in English country churches. The poem "Quid Hic Agis," which describes the impression created on youth, on middle age, on old age, by "That Chapter from Kings, Harvest-time brings," is extraordinarily fine in conception and execution.

> How the prophet broken
> By grief, unspoken,
> Went heavily away
> To fast and pray.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> I did not apprehend
> As I sat to the end
> And watched for her smile
> Across the sunned aisle
> That this theme of a seer
> That came once a year
> Might, when sands were heaping
> Beliked sweat creeping
> Or in any degree
> Bear on her and me.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> But now at last,
> When our glory has passed . . . .
> I feel the shake
> Of wind and earthquake
> And consuming fire
> Nigher and nigher,
> And the voice catch clear,
> "What doest thou here?"

He is fond of "poetizing among the tombs," as Nietzsche said of Dante; and he wonders in one of his poems whether man's consciousness was a mistake of God's But Hardy's philosophy, or want of philosophy, is well-known, and need not detain us. It is not often that it becomes an artistic offence, although some of the poems on "life's little ironies" may provoke a smile rather than a sigh. The grim novelettes in verse to which Hardy is addicted descend easily to bathos.

> The morning came: *to the park of the Peer*
> The royal couple drew.

The story in which these lines occur is about a child for whom royal sponsors had been secured. The king and queen arrive before "the carpeted door"; just at that moment the child is inconsiderate enough to die; but the parents—a marquis and a marchoness—keep their heads amid the confusion:

> "What's now to be done? We can disappoint not
> The King and Queen!" the family cried
> With eyes spread wide.
>
> "Even now they approach the chestnut drive!
> The service must be read."
> "Well, since we can't christen the child alive,
> By God, we shall have to christen him dead!"
> The marquis said.

These verses appear in the section headed "Moments of Vision." Under "Satires of Circumstances," there is a piece, "Ah, Are You Digging on my Grave," which again exhibits a somewhat similar weakness of Mr. Hardy's. The buried lady feels that someone is digging upon her grave. Is it her husband? her nearest kin? her enemy? No: these have forgotten: it is her dog, the one true heart that still remembers her.

> What feeling do we ever find
> To equal among human kind
> A dog's fidelity?

Perceive Mr. Hardy's artfulnes—the reader, anticipating at this point a pleasing sentimental ending to the story, will be the more overwhelmed by the ironical turn of the concluding stanza:

> Mistress, I dug upon your grave
> To bury a bone, in case
> I should be hungry near this spot
> When passing by on my daily trot.
> I am sorry, but I quite forgot
> It was your resting place.

The incongruous dancing measures of the stanza cause the reader to suspect charitably that in this poem Mr. Hardy may be satirizing not "circumstance" but a trick of his own temper.

Such extreme lapses in thought or idea are not common in Mr. Hardy's verse. But lapses of phrase, due to the fact that Mr Hardy's diction is essentially that of a prose writer, are of constant occurrence—the prose diction produces in verse a bad prose like "the park of the peer," "we can disappoint not." He is seldom dull, however (if this be a virtue, which Mr. George Moore doubts); and his characteristic fault, that of a lack of the sense of congruity, is at least not one that distracts the reader's attention. A curious example is the poem "The Pedestrian."

> A student was I—of Schopenhauer
> Kant, Hegel—and the fountained bower
> Of the muses too knew my regard
> But ah—I fear me
> The grave gapes near me.

It is a somewhat unexpected piece of information for a gentleman driving a phaeton through homely Wesser to receive of a fellow traveller—corpulent, wearing well-shaped shoes and an artistic beaver—on the occasion of being offered a lift.

MR. HARDY'S LYRICS.

"Times Literary Supplement" 27.11.19

If devotion and love are the happiest flowers that can intertwine a poet's laurels, then the wreath upon Mr. Hardy's brows is indeed burdened with sweetness. It is impossible to read him with indifference or in mere admiration. We blow either hot or cold; a fact that may in part explain why, years ago, he was compelled to surrender verse for prose, and long afterwards to forswear the writing of fiction. That dead past has now prudently buried its dead. To-day our proud affection may even veil his rarest qualities. In heart as well as in time we stand too close to his work to appraise its complete achievement, to see it in true perspective and in relation to that of the great masters.

In reading again, and in reading steadily through, his lyrical poems* we can realize, at any rate, the abundance and variety of his work, its homogeneousness and originality. No other English novelist has written prose that in effect, in feeling and atmosphere is [illegible] dling his midnight manuscript, a candle-lit face, a tottering tombstone, a church clock, a gargoyle, a fiddle, the wind in the chimney, dying daylight—and the poet in him answers as to a decoy. It may be convenient to call him a realist—though what poet, if reality is the habitation of the spirit as well of the body, can be anything else is a nice question. A more precise term would be realizationist.

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THE IRISH STATESMAN

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POETIZING AMONG THE TOMBS

COLLECTED POEMS. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 12s. 6d.

Mr. Thomas Hardy occupied himself quite early in life with the writing of verses; yet it is only in quite recent years that he has won his present high reputation as a poet. Some of the pieces in this new "collected" volume, "Lyrical, Narratory, Reflective," were written in the sixties—at a date when Mr. Yeats, Mr. Kipling and other poets, who have lived long enough to experience fashion's fickleness, were still in their cradles. Of that fickleness Mr. Hardy himself has had little experience. His greatness as a novelist has for long been all but unquestioned; and the recent action of the younger critical

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"What doest thou here?"

He is fond of "poetizing among the tombs," as Nietzsche said of Dante; and he wonders in one of his poems whether man's consciousness was a mistake of God's But Hardy's philosophy, or want of philosophy, is well-known, and need not detain us. It is not often that it becomes an artistic offence, although some of the poems on "life's little ironies" may provoke a smile rather

"Times Literary Supplement" 27.11.19.

[Registered as a Newspaper.] PRICE 2d

MR. HARDY'S LYRICS.

If devotion and love are the happiest flowers that can intertwine a poet's laurels, then the wreath upon Mr. Hardy's brows is indeed burdened with sweetness. It is impossible to read him with indifference or in mere admiration. We blow either hot or cold; a fact that may in part explain why, years ago, he was compelled to surrender verse for prose, and long afterwards to forswear the writing of fiction. That dead past has now prudently buried its dead. To-day our proud affection may even veil his rarest qualities. In heart as well as in time we stand too close to his work to appraise its complete achievement, to see it in true perspective and in relation to that of the great masters.

In reading again, and in reading steadily through, his lyrical poems* we can realize, at any rate, the abundance and variety of his work, its homogeneousness and originality. No other English novelist has written prose that in effect, in feeling and atmosphere is nearer to poetry. No other English dramatist has written an historical play which more closely resembles than does *The Dynasts* a vast panoramic fiction, wherein real men and women so strangely reflect the idiosyncrasies of a distinct personality and imagination. So with these poems. They are, one and all, haunted with the presence of their writer. Every line of them—best and worst—is sealed with his own hand. We share an intense solitude of the spirit. We are as close to actual experience as words can bring us. But even the most lyrical and individual of them is touched with the dramatic. A score of diverse disguises conceal (and betray) the one wearer; and ever to and fro glides the shuttle of wizardry, weaving make-believe out of the actual. More than once Mr. Hardy has warned us that his lyrics are dramatic or impersonative in conception, even when not obviously so. He has bidden us make allowance for widely differing moods and circumstances. He deprecates, that is, an arraignment of himself as A for what another self utters as Z. None the less—Alpha to Omega—all here is his, and all is himself. Nor should the inherent apparent contradictions be cancelled out as in a sum in arithmetic. They are light and colour from the facets of one multi-angled consciousness, that makes a various and chequered beauty of the white ray that is the infinite reality.

The simplest of poets may, it is true, drape himself in more than one domino. Herrick is Ariel in his songs, Caliban in his epigrams; the bacchanalian of the Mermaid and of the Triple Tun at one moment, the pious vicar of Dean Prior the next. But Mr. Hardy in his lyrics not only plays countless parts (from Prospero's to Trinculo's), and will squander on three brief stanzas the nucleus of a novel, but he is untrammelled by the incapacity to make poetry of the commonplace. In the Sala delle Muse, in Rome, he once kept tryst with one (surely a distant cousin of Sue Bridehead's) who was "an essence of the Nine"—"a pensive smile on her sweet, small, marvellous face." He lamented his fickleness, his inconstant love for Form also, and Tune, Story, Dance, and Hymn. She consoled him:—

> Nay, wight, thou sway'st not. These are but phases of one;
> And that one is I; and I am projected from thee,
> One that out of thy brain and heart thou causest to be—
> Extern to thee nothing. Grieve not, nor thyself becall,
> Woo where thou wilt; and rejoice thou canst love at all.

So well has he obeyed her that anywhen, anywhere that ghostly face may smile on him in still regard, and make of every working day exactly four-and-twenty poetic hours. Certain themes may recur again and again; but he is not confined to any particular region of thought, experience, or of the imagination. Self-forgotten, he lives in the created. Absorbed in characters of his own making, he none the less fashions them in his own protean image. Never was the tinder of the mind more hospitable to the feeblest of actuality's sparks. The merest glimpse—a boy in a railway carriage with a key hung round his neck, a skeleton parasol, a tapping moth, a cheval glass, a fly bestraddling his midnight manuscript, a candle-lit face, a tottering tombstone, a church clock, a gargoyle, a fiddle, the wind in the chimney, dying daylight—and the poet in him answers as to a decoy. It may be convenient to call him a realist—though what poet, if reality is the habitation of the spirit as well of the body, can be anything else is a nice question. A more precise term would be realizationist.

But if, apart from mask and domino, his scope, his multifarious range of theme, differentiates Mr. Hardy's lyrical poetry, no less does his treatment of it, the thought with which he complicates and deepens it, and the intensity, less of impulse than of elaboration, with which he constrains it to his will. The poet whose nut-tree bears silver nutmegs and gold pears would only scare his Spanish princess if he plucked for her also crab-apples and sloes. Fruits as tart and acrid abound in Mr. Hardy's orchard; and however gladly we may feast our eyes upon their vivid and sombre clusters, they are as bitter to some stomachs as was the honey-flavoured book to St. John. Lyrical poetry in general makes its own lovely paradise, fresh and sweet with dews of Lethe. Its airs blow rare from the intense inane. Much of Mr. Hardy's poetry limes our wings and tethers us close indeed to a God-forgotten "tainted ball." Mutes attired in dead black, their eyes submissive though preternaturally active, their ears exquisitely "on the *qui vive*," stand on either side of the portals of its philosophy. Poem after poem reiterates that this poor scene of our earthly life is "a show God ought surely to shut up soon," the "unweeting dream-work" of some vast Imbecility, that spends eternity in passive reverie or remorse, that framed this planet in jest and abandoned it to hazardry. "That I made Earth, and life, and man It still repenteth me." As for Nature—she is nought more pitiful than a sleep-worker. "Busy in her handsome house known as Space," she has fallen a-drowse; and man's only sure reward for all his hopes and aspirations is that "storm-tight roof" which "earth grants all her kind"; his only comfort that, though he must at last fall a prey to the "iron daggers of distress," twice he cannot die. If this, and scores of kindred maledictions, were the final, unalleviated message to humanity of "One who, past doubtings all, Waits in Unhope," then the poet in Mr. Hardy would have died in the arms of the philosopher, as might have Heine in those of Schopenhauer. But Mr. Hardy is too imaginative a philosopher to venture a final answer to the great riddle. He asks and asks:—

> Thy shadow, Earth, from Pole to Central Sea,
> Now steals along upon the Moon's meek shine
> In even monochrome and curving line
> Of imperturbable serenity.
>
> How shall I link such sun-cast symmetry
> With the torn troubled form I know as thine,
> That profile, placid as a brow divine,
> With continents of moil and misery?
> And can immense Mortality but throw
> So small a shade? . . .

No God, it is true, could loom more phantasmal and remote from our trivial and agonizing affairs than the "all-Immanent Will" that drives us into the world in "rabble rout," mutters in slumber, or mocks, or sighs out of his tenebrous abiding-place in consciousness, at "the monotonous moil of strained hard-run Humanity." But anthropomorphic deities are usually flattering reflections of their creators. This deity is infinitely less compassionate, tender, magnanimous, and faithful than the poet whose workmanship he is, and who in every word he writes is present with us. Wherefore relenting and tenderness often steal into the limning of this Divine conception, and pity smiles from the eye-holes of the cold mask of the ironic:—

> Thou shouldst have learnt that *Not to Mend*
> For Me could mean but *Not to Know*. . .

It takes two to make either a quarrel or a friendship. "Dazed and puzzled 'twixt the gleam and gloom," the only human hope is honesty.

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watch them as closely as in mind we can watch the faces of friends with whom long ago we were in intimate and earnest colloquy; but seldom, indeed, as watches Peeping Tom when the vivisectionist is busy. So passionately intent is Mr. Hardy's "visionary power" on the naked truth of things in their changing aspects that he seems designedly to reject in his record of them the refinements of art and beauty.

But since beauty and significance are debts which no living imagination can evade paying to reality, his poetry is drenched with them. Even if these figments of humanity were absent from his pages, we might almost guess his portraits from their frames. No other poetry is richer in scene, within doors or without; in landscape—its times and lights and seasons; in Englishness. To present a true account, debit and credit, between Mr. Hardy and his Wessex would make the fame of a literary accountant. But what of that further west of some of the loveliest of his poems, wherein "in chasmal beauty" roars the Atlantic, and swing the surges over sunken Lyonesse?

Yet, for pure melody, the music of this verse is unlikely to redden with envy the cheeks of the Sirens. The style is often crustacean. Occasionally it is "an irk no local hope beguiles," and as if "smitten by years-long wryness born of misprision." The thought, too, may be as densely burdened in its expression as the scar of a tree by the healing saps that have enwarted its surface. But what rare and wondrous clumps of mistletoe bedeck the branches. Stubborn the medium may be, but with what mastery is it compelled to do this craftsman's bidding. Let the practised poet borrow but a score of Mr. Hardy's latinities and vernaculars—hodiernal, receptivity, deicide, a senior soul-flame, his mindsight, naysaying, eyesome, potent appraisements, smugger, years-haired, forefolk, and the rest—and then invoke his Muse! Difficulty, seeming impossibility, is the breath of Mr. Hardy's nostrils as an artist. He makes our English so much his own that a single quoted line, lifted at random, betrays his workmanship. He forces, hammers poetry into his words; not, like most poets, charms it out of them. He disdains the "poetical," yet will redeem the veriest commonplace; and will so encrust his chosen theme that it shines the brighter for the roughness and uncouthness of its setting. His argument winds in and out of his congested, complex stanzas, keeping a low pitch, and, by emphasizing rather than by suddenly escaping its monotony, wins his effect.

When indeed life and energy pour their visionings of truth and reality into the mould of form, poetry cannot but be their reward. This imagination, accepting the world even while renouncing the "Impercipient" that set it in the void, redeems its mischances, and of the sorriest disaster makes a memory for our comfort and understanding. Charm, grace, delicacy seem idle terms in the presence of this genius. Bare, uncompromising, mocking, pitiful, and utterly human, Mr. Hardy has gone his way, aloof, impassioned, watching life, living it, sharing it with man and nature; and, above all, loving its seared, suffering, heroic face that smiles on at grief, and is indomitable in happiness in a world that seemingly cheats to destroy.

A poem entitled "In the Seventies," having for motto "Qui deridetur ab amico suo sicut ego," tells, in retrospect, of the starry thoughts that in those far days shed their magic light on this poet's "worktimes" and his "soundless hours of rest;" tells, too, of "the vision":—

In the seventies nought could darken or destroy it,
Locked in me,
Though as delicate as lamp-worm's lucency;
Neither mist nor murk could weaken or alloy it
In the seventies!—could not darken or destroy it,
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Upwards of forty years have passed since that day, and all but a fraction of the work in this volume is of the last two or three decades. Mr. Hardy, once and for all, set up as poet, then, at an age when Shakespeare left our mortal stage. This book, for that reason alone, is an unprecedented achievement. Apart from that, to read steadily through it—and what severer test of lyrical poetry could be devised?—is to win to the consciousness not of any superficial consistency, but assuredly of a "harmony of colouring"; not, however keen the joy manifest "in the making," of an art become habitual, but of a shadowy unity and design. In the seventies Mr. Hardy could not have foreseen that full design, nor can he have consciously traced it out. But laborious days and an unfaltering constancy have set free those starry thoughts, that secret wondrous vision, and have thrown open one of the most hospitable doors in English literature in welcome to all.

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"The Observer" 30.11.19.

MR. HARDY'S COLLECTED POEMS.

COLLECTED POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan. 8s. 6d. net.)

This volume, which is uniform with the one-volume edition of "The Dynasts," contains all the poems previously published in Mr. Hardy's five volumes of lyric poetry—"Wessex Poems," "Poems of the Past and Present," "Time's Laughingstocks," "Satires of Circumstance," and "Moments of Vision." One or two titles of poems have been changed; there has been some very slight rearrangement in order; and one or two felicitous alterations have been made in certain poems in "Moments of Vision" (collation might perhaps reveal similar changes in the poems of other volumes). In the poem "On Sturminster Foot-bridge," for instance, the swallows no longer stand "equidistantly in rows"; they stand "ranged in wistful waiting rows"; and one natural fact that had no significance in relation to the poem has given place to another—"waiting"—which, lightly touched in the "wistful" with the spectator's sentiment, fills out the beautiful minor chord of autumn that is just about to resolve into the major of the woman who is a light in the darkness. In "The Shadow on the Stone," again, Mr. Hardy's Druid stone now "broods in the garden white and lone" instead of "stands"; and the reader thrills to the new touch of poetic meaning.

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The other manifestation of faith is more difficult to define. Is it faith in himself, or faith in human nature? Nothing will induce Mr. Hardy to go soaring away into rhapsodies, or sugar his poems with prettiness. Only cynics who are afraid of their own cynicism will do those things; and thereupon they cease to be artists and become charlatans. If Mr. Hardy feels cynical, or sees cynically, then he will write cynically. But how much cynicism can the candid eye discover in all these five hundred pages? Is not the main attitude the very opposite of cynicism? This, we may imagine him saying, is what I saw and felt, or what he or she saw and felt; it is nothing else. And because it was seen or felt by a human being, whether in temporal fact or in the poet's imagination, it is worthy of attention, worthy of being shaped by art into a form of expression that shall communicate it. The whole direction of the volume, then, seems to lie towards revealing the worth and interest of human thought and emotion, not disguised in theatrical robes, but caught by art in their habit as they live, whether that be plain homespun, or gossamer, or the sables of tragedy. "Les jeunes" just now are very busy defying the accepted great. Mr. Hardy, being himself great, has no need to defy anyone. He has faith in himself, and can be purely creative. He goes his own way, making new beauty.

DECEMBER 6, 1919.

THE WESTMINSTER GAZETTE

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.

"The Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy." Vol. I. Collected Poems, Lyrical, Narrative, Reflective. (Macmillan.) 8s. 6d. net.

"Unadjusted impressions have their value, and the road to a true philosophy of life seems to lie in humbly recording diverse readings of its phenomena as they are forced upon us by chance and change." These words occur in Mr. Hardy's preface to "Poems of the Past and Present," and were intended for any reader who might find in its contents "little cohesion of thought, or harmony of colouring." As a thinker, he had, of course, himself first detected their want of cohesion; but, as a poet, without regret. For, indeed, the one essential consistency of a lyrical poem—and, whether narrative or reflective, all these poems are lyrical in effect—is inherent in itself, admitting of no compromise. Its truth is that of a smile or a shudder, of an "I love you," a "Heaven forefend." Its nucleus may be a thought, but that thought must be charged with mood, imagination, and feeling. All human life at any moment may in this sense be said to be a lyric addressed to the infinite. While a true philosophy may await the poet at his journey's end, it is his road thither of which he tells; and though the intellectualist may prefer a phial of attar to a Babylonian garden of roses, the more diverse a poet's "readings" the richer is his companionship, and the gift that he confers. Moreover, however irreconcilable Mr. Hardy's individual recordings may be, every one of them in form and content bears his signature. They are dyed with his personality; and it is this rather than any intrinsic philosophy which they carry in solution that is their unity in diversity. What Bacon said of Poetry in his "Advancement of Learning" is surely true of this poetry: it gives "some shadow of satisfaction to the mind . . . in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it, the world being in proportion inferior to the soul."

What is most conspicuous in Mr. Hardy's poems is their unlikeness to other lyrical poetry. They cover not only a wider range of experience, but it is an experience kept rigorously close to ordinary human nature. They tell "earthly stories," and a naked veracity is their heavenly reward. Their fire burns with an intense, still glow, vaguely lighting the furthest coigns and recesses of human consciousness; though at times—and to a shivering extremity in some of the "Satires"—we find ourselves staring into the grinning blackness of an empty grate, our only comfort being the speculation whether the lamentable voice we hear is the wind's or a ventriloquist's. It is a poetry largely outside the tradition. Neither in subject-matter nor in technique does it seem to owe anything to other writers. What is still more remarkable, little modern poetry seems to have been directly influenced by its supremely valuable example. Its medium—words—is as apparent as the stone out of which a statue has been carved; yet we never compare what Mr. Hardy says with literature, but always with life. In spite of the fact that though, like Shakespeare's, Mr. Hardy's matter is nature, "his art" must yet "give the fashion"; and however intense our enjoyment of his astonishing technical mastery may be when we examine his verse, in general his poetry seems not a representation of actuality, but well-nigh actuality itself. To quote is the supreme difficulty, because it is so easy. But take this lovely "Afterwards":

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
  And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,
  "He was a man who used to notice such things."

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,
  The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight
Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may think,
  "To him this must have been a familiar sight."

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
  When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
One may say, "He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,
  But he could do little for them; and now he is gone."

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door,
  Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
  "He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,
  And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,
  "He hears it not now, but used to notice such things"?

Poem, indeed; but, as we read it, how vivid, intense, and profound a piece of experience it becomes. Yet we remain just our workaday selves; it has simply, "humbly" evoked only the deepest heart, the most hospitable mind, and the quietest imagination we have to give.

Not only is the experience thus derived from Mr. Hardy's poetry exceptionally diversified, exceptionally "human" (as distinguished from the seraphic, or mystical, or intellectual), it is different in kind. Einstein, it is said, has discovered a warp in space. "Out there" the centre of a circle is not necessarily equidistant from its circumference. With trepidation we refer to these high matters; but certainly one finds oneself looking a little closely at Mr. Hardy's "elevation" of life, the centre of his circumferential interest. His themes are not only "over-sadly tinged," but a certain pertinacity to this end is evident. We cannot, it is true, lay to the dramatist's or novelist's account—except indirectly—the sentiments which his characters express, but we cannot but observe the circumstances in which he tends to place them. Mr. Hardy has not been called a pessimist merely because he does not praise this as the best possible of worlds, or "That Which some men worship" as the best and likeliest of all conceivable gods. These poems are not fantasies on life's "silver lining," and so emphatically are they not so that this, too, differentiates them from lyrical poetry in general. [illegible] harsher, more insistent, less [illegible], and at times [illegible] wilful.

The satirical, the macabre, the grotesque even, may be found in these poems, but never the purely fantastic. [illegible] humour is as "serious" as their irony. Whether or not we accept the thought, we trust implicitly its [illegible] and [illegible]; they convince us, that is, that mortal existence is [illegible] awaits a seeming disaster, goes wantonly astray, is the prey of remorse, sacrifices the innocent, the happily illusioned, betrays the guileless, and defeats the strong. But since the sense of this affliction has been transmuted into poetry, we may in the event be relieved, freed from the inessential, greater-minded, and released from the warring of false hopes and fallacies. So even Mr. Hardy's blackest truth gives light. We turn away from [illegible] as when, after the feverish horrors of his trial, on hearing his [illegible]

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poem—and, [illegible] lyrical in effect—is inherent in itself, [illegible] Its truth is that of a smile or a shudder, of an "[illegible]" or "Heaven forefend." Its nucleus may be a thought, but that thought must be charged with mood, imagination, and feeling. All human life at any moment may in this sense be said to be a lyric addressed to the infinite. While a true philosophy may await the poet at his journey's end, it is his road thither of which he tells; and though the intellectualist may prefer a phial of attar to a Babylonian garden of roses, the more diverse a poet's "readings" the richer is his companionship, and the gift that he confers. Moreover, however irreconcilable Mr. Hardy's individual recordings may be, every one of them in form and content bears his signature. They are dyed with his personality; and it is this rather than any intrinsic philosophy which they carry in solution that is their unity in diversity. What Bacon said of Poetry in his "Advancement of Learning" is surely true of this poetry: it gives "some shadow of satisfaction to the mind . . . in those points wherein the nature of things doth deny it, the world being in proportion inferior to the soul."

What is most conspicuous in Mr. Hardy's poems is their unlikeness to other lyrical poetry. They cover not only a wider range of experience, but it is an experience kept rigorously close to ordinary human nature. They tell "earthly stories," and a naked veracity is their heavenly reward. Their fire burns with an intense, still glow, vaguely lighting the furthest coigns and recesses of human consciousness; though at times—and to a shivering extremity in some of the "Satires"—we find ourselves staring into the grinning blackness of an empty grate, our only comfort being the speculation whether the lamentable voice we hear is the wind's or a ventriloquist's. It is a poetry largely outside the tradition. Neither in subject-matter nor in technique does it seem to owe anything to other writers. What is still more remarkable, little modern poetry seems to have been directly influenced by its supremely valuable example. Its medium—words—is as apparent as the stone out of which a statue has been carved; yet we never compare what Mr. Hardy says with literature, but always with life. In spite of the fact that though, like Shakespeare's, Mr. Hardy's matter is nature, "his art" must yet "give the fashion"; and however intense our enjoyment of his astonishing technical mastery may be when we examine his verse, in general his poetry seems not a representation of actuality, but well-nigh actuality itself. To quote is the supreme difficulty, because it is so easy. But take this lovely "Afterwards":

When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
 And the May month flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,
 "He was a man who used to notice such things."

If it be in the dusk when, like an eyelid's soundless blink,
 The dewfall-hawk comes crossing the shades to alight
Upon the wind-warped upland thorn, a gazer may think,
 "To him this must have been a familiar sight."

If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
 When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
One may say, "He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,
 But he could do little for them; and now he is gone."

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door,
 Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
 "He was one who had an eye for such mysteries"?

And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,
 And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,
 "He hears it not now, but used to notice such things"?

Poem, indeed; but, as we read it, how vivid, intense, and profound a piece of experience it becomes. Yet we remain just our workaday selves; it has simply, "humbly" evoked only the deepest heart, the most hospitable mind, and the quietest imagination we have to give.

Not only is the experience thus derived from Mr. Hardy's poetry exceptionally diversified, exceptionally "human" (as distinguished from the seraphic, or mystical, or intellectual), it is different in kind. Einstein, it is said, has discovered a warp in space. "Out there" the centre of a circle is not necessarily equidistant from its circumference. With trepidation we refer to these high matters; but certainly one finds oneself looking a little closely at Mr. Hardy's "elevation" of life, the centre of his circumferential interest. His themes are not only "over-sadly tinged," but a certain pertinacity to this end is evident. We cannot, it is true, lay to the dramatist's or novelist's account—except indirectly—the sentiments which his characters express, but we cannot but observe the circumstances in which he tends to place them. Mr. Hardy has not been called a pessimist merely because he does not praise this as the best possible of worlds, or "That Which some men worship" as the best and likeliest of all conceivable gods. These poems are not fantasies on life's "silver lining," and so emphatically are they not so that this, too, differentiates them from lyrical poetry in general. The melancholy is harsher, more insistent, less relieved, and at times apparently wilful.

The satirical, the macabre, the grotesque even, may be found in these poems, but never the purely fantastic. Their humour is as "serious" as their irony. Whether or not we accept the thought, we trust implicitly its presentation and the mood. They convince us, that is, that mortal existence is thus hedged in, awaits a seeming disaster, goes wantonly astray, is the prey of remorse, sacrifices the innocent, the happily illusioned, betrays the guileless, and defeats the strong. But since the sense of this affliction has been transmuted into poetry, we may in the event be relieved, freed from the inessential, greater-minded, and released from the warring of false hopes and fallacies. So even Mr. Hardy's blackest truth gives light. We turn away from scrutinising it as when, after the feverish horrors of his trial, on hearing his sentence, the condemned man, in a sudden quiet, leaves the dock. Moreover, we are but mute witnesses of these defects and betrayals of folly and fortune, though our minds and hearts share in them. Their bias is towards safety. They are founded in truth. Theirs is not a shimmering mirage which our next moment's glimpse of actuality will disappoint. Wherefore every tinge and fragrance, beam of moon or sun, echo of sweetness, loveliness and beguilement that is in these poems is the more assuredly ours. It has, as we say, been "bought and paid for." Indeed, what is beautiful reveals itself as in Nature, whose offspring flourishes primarily in her service, for their own use, and not for ornament.

We must remember, too, that Mr. Hardy began habitually to write verse (though his earliest and latest work is singularly of a piece) at an age when most men, having elaborated their poetic style for the expression of the thoughts and delights and dreams of youth, discover it to be inadequate for the expression of the experiences and interests of their maturity, and so are apt to give up the practice, or, far worse, to repeat themselves. For this reason his poems are addressed, as he himself said that his novels are addressed, to men and women of full age. Therefore we know what he tells us.

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Times Literary Supplement 18.12.19.

SOME EMENDATIONS IN T[illegible] OF MR. HARDY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE [illegible]

Sir,—In the first volume of his [illegible] Recreations" the late Sir Edw[illegible] has a fascinating paper on the second [illegible] in certain poets. Specimens are the[illegible] of emendations in Coleridge, Te[illegible] FitzGerald, Myers, Rossetti, Mathew [illegible] Keats, and Wordsworth; but althoug[illegible] list, for the purpose of illustrating [illegible] delicate art, could scarcely have been [illegible] proved, the work of a living poet, [illegible] greatest of the tribe now left among [illegible] might have provided some instructive [illegible] amples. It is true that the study of emenda-tions may degenerate into an offensive eccentricity and become, in the words of Boyle, "next after anagrams and acrostics the lowest diversion a man can betake himself to;" but it is not without its legitimate interest. When it is "no longer a question of choice between the guesses of scholars and pedants at what a poet might, could, would, or should have written," but "a choice between two or more versions all of which he did write," I think it justifies Sir Edward Cook's claim that it becomes a true "exercise in taste with the poet himself for master." A knowledge of the intellectual process by which a poem has advanced to perfection has appeared to many skilled critics (Johnson among the number) a matter of great importance. Mr. Hardy's poetry contains a number of notable emendations, and it is somewhat remarkable that (with the exception of a single brief reference to changes made in "Moments of Vision") they have escaped the critical attention of your own and every other reviewer. It has been justly observed that the chief characteristics of Hardy's poetry are simplicity and intensity: it is hammered out, but it is hammered out fine. Because it "clings with minute fidelity to the author's precise meaning," harsh discords and the use of intolerable words have frightened away many a reader before the hidden spell has had time to work upon him. But although Mr. Hardy's "masterly rectitude and self-reliance" forbid him to modify the significance of his poems in the search for verbal felicities, he has laboured to remove obscure and uncouth expressions wherever he could do so without damage to the sense.

The "Wessex Poems" and "Poems of the Past and Present" are particularly rich in interesting examples of his fastidious care. "The Alarm" contains important alterations in the second stanza, which has now become satisfactory rhymed narrative. Mr. Gosse has said that the poet "for his indifference to a mellifluous run lays himself open to a mild rebuke." This indifference could scarcely be more convincingly displayed than by beginning a stanza:

> 'Twas hard to realize on
> This snug side the mute horizon,

but that was the original form of the lines. "Leipzig," another piece in the same class, has an exceedingly commonplace line converted into one finely suggestive—

> The march . . .
> She'd heard from the trumpets when the allies
> (1) Her city overcame.
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but I cannot reconcile myself to the substitution of "tap" for the "touse of the tambourine." Mr. Hardy has made an attempt in the terrible "Peasant's Confession" to wrest greater coherency out of the *Joidoigue* stanza, I fear with small result. He has also bethought him that "gold pieces three" would be a trifling reward for the peasant's black treachery, and changed them to "much gold for me."

In that fine and tragic ballad "San Sebastian" there are several significant retouchings; I will only instance one. The Sergeant, relating the beginning of the carouse in the captured town, is first made to say—

> "Down the stony steps of the house-fronts white
> We rolled rich puncheons of Spanish grape,"

but the idea of rifling the houses for drink and treasure is far more imaginatively given in the substituted—

> From the shady vaults of their walls of white.

I must, however, point out that the whole sense of the poem is elucidated by the additional stanza—

> May be we shape our offspring's guise
> From fancy, or we know not what,
> And that no deep impression dies,—
> For the mother of my child is not
> The mother of her eyes.

"The Sergeant's Song," in the "Wessex Poems," has the refrain, "Then little Boney he'll pounce down"; this is changed into "Then Boney he'll come pouncing down," and the ballad now moves to a brisker measure. "My Cicely," a poem of exquisite pathos, in which a single rhyme is kept sounding throughout, has an unfortunate expression removed, and the delightful "Dance at the Phœnix" is retouched in many places. "A Sign-Seeker," in which the stanzaic form is in absolute harmony with the solemn subject, contains three or four of the most profoundly tender and lovely lines Mr. Hardy has ever written. [illegible] long charmed me, and [illegible] the highest [illegible] changes [illegible] conclusion of the early tale of the "Two Men," which Mr. Gosse says: "might be the skeleton-scenario for a whole elaborate novel." The last stanza of "Zermatt" as re-written shows us how the poet is sometimes so involved in awkward preterite endings ("dst" three times in the one stanza) that it becomes impossible for him to straighten out the muddle. But I must bring my notes on the Wessex poems to an end, or the later volumes will be crowded out of this letter; perhaps I may take "The Well-Beloved" as a final case. Here a line of perfect bathos (it has already been selected for unfavourable comment by Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie) remains standing, though there are other alterations and a most happy change in the penultimate stanza:

> (1) Thereat she vanished by the Cross
> That, entering Kingsbere town,
> The two long lanes form, near the fosse
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The poignant simplicity of "Unrealized" has been greatly enhanced by the complete re-writing of the last stanza. The architectural lines descriptive of the headstones that are to be set up above the sundered lovers have been dropped out from "In Death Divided." There is a change that must have a very real interest for those who have minutely studied the implications of Mr. Hardy's pessimism in "God's Funeral":—

> I did not forget
> That what was mourned for I, too, long had prized.

"Long" replaces "once."

In later editions there is a wonderful emendation to be found in "The Haunter," by which at last the poet has secured a single line of the most perfect quality.

> (1) Yes, I accompany him to places
> Only dreamers know,
> Where the shy hares show their faces,
> Where the night rooks go;—
>
> (2) Where the shy hares *limp long paces*,
> Where the night rooks go;

> Is it worth while, dear, when
> Our cheeks are worn, our early brown is grey;
> When, meet or part we, none says yea or nay,
> Or heeds, or cares? . . .
>
> Is it worth while, dear, since
> As mates in Mellstock churchyard we can lie,
> Till the last crash of all things low and high
> Shall end the spheres?

The greater the artist, the greater the discipline. In Mr. Hardy's case this discipline has resulted in a marvellous economy of language. Piece after piece in this collected edition, I have long felt, must have been the result of prodigious and painstaking labour, during which every word was tested over and over again before being accepted or dismissed. The other day this was confirmed, out of his own editorial experience, by the chief of our foremost literary weekly, who described to me how, a few months ago, Mr. Hardy had written a poem for him, and returned proof after proof with so many corrections that each proof was practically a new poem! Only after five such revisions did word come from the author that no further proof was needed.

This economy—the gift of all greatness in any direction—can be observed most adequately in a poem like "The Farm-woman's Winter," which I choose for an illustration, not so much for any uniqueness, but because it is one of the briefest:—

> If seasons were all summers,
> And leaves would never fall,
> And hopping casement-comers
> Were foodless not at all,
> And fragile folk might be here
> That white winds bid depart;
> Then one I used to see here
> Would warm my wasted heart!
>
> One frail, who bravely tilling
> Long hours in gripping gusts,
> Was mastered by their chilling,
> And now his ploughshare rusts.
> So savage winter catches
> The breath of limber things,
> And what I love he snatches,
> And what I love not brings.

It is possible, of course, that of those people who cannot read the poems of Mr. Hardy with anything like the pleasure gained from the novels, there are some who are repelled by the pessimism that dominates the two poems I have quoted. And certainly the darker side of existence has a tremendous place in this volume.

A mere tabulation of the themes in any section of it will show that for lyrical quantities in the minor key the author of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" takes a lot of beating. Of one-hundred-and-fifty-eight pieces in "Moments of Vision," for example, quite half of them are, rawly and without symbolism, poems on subjects that would have delighted the heart of Mr. Gummidge. Thirty-two are of death or dead wives, twenty-five of ghosts, spirits, apparitions, phantoms, spectres, or wraiths—Mr. Hardy observes the subtle distinction—four of skeletons or corpses, or newly mouldering bodies, and, to cap all, a round dozen on such an entertaining department of human activity, or inactivity, as a churchyard!

Truly, it is significant of the heritage which the Victorian era bequeathed to us that our great poet should find his material in such doleful quarters! To be quite fair, however, it ought to be added that though in the remainder of the poems there are to be found such truthful lines as "the drizzling grey of an English May," there are equally truthful lyrics of such [illegible]

"The Hillgate Monthly" March. 1920 —

Thomas Hardy's Greatest Works.

THE journalist of the *New Statesman*—who until recently has signed his name as "Solomon Eagle"—has been wondering if 1920 will prove itself able to compete in literary importance with the twentieth year of a century ago. The three events of 1820, for example, were the publication of Scott's "Ivanhoe," Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound," and Keats' volume of poems, which included "Isabella" and "The Eve of St. Agnes."

All clamour and display she puts aside,
  Hating the stately ode's too pompous tone,
And broods in secret o'er those deeper thoughts
  And hot desires that move the heart alone.

The holiest words are rarest on her lips—
  Mother and country—ne'er in joy or grief;
For like the stolid ploughman, she is dumb,
  And as a wall sans beauty or relief.

LORNA KEELING COLLARD.

Amongst the numerous other entries in the Lyric Competition, some very good work was done by the following competitors :—

Ellen Itallinack, Alice W. Linford, W. A. Sunanacekora (Ceylon), W. Ruffle Rayner, T. McClelland, Emiline T. Banbury, Beatrice R. Hillyard, J. Pendlebury, M. E. Kennedy, Lettie Cole, Dorothy M. Bun, John D. Ware, and Irene L. Watts.

OUR NEXT PRIZE COMPETITION.

For the best Lyric—not too long—we offer a prize of One Guinea. Entrance fee 1/-.

For the best Ballade, Villanelle, or Triolet, we offer a prize of Half a Guinea. Entrance fee, 1/-.

Entries should reach us by the 20th February.

Poetry. A Magazine of Verse -

Jan. 1920.

REVIEWS AND NOTICES.

Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy. Macmillan & Co., London, 1919, 8/6 net.

In his famous essay on Michaelangelo, Walter Pater has made a text of the fact that on the crown of the great David there is a fragment of unshaped stone. One is reminded of this when reading the poems of Thomas Hardy. Again and again one comes across the unshaped fragment. Is it a deliberate artifice of the poet, a piece of artistic carelessness to show his scorn of the facile smoothness of lesser men, or is his substance too stubborn even for such a Demiurgus? We do not know. It may please or it may irritate (as you happen to be built), but there it is, an abiding characteristic of his work.

MS.

ry," etc.)

…ther emotion so suppressed and …f lyrical poetry at all. Here, …s a realist without embroidery, …mes Nemesis overtakes him, …s stark and bare as if it were …can sacrifice too much to …a niggardly parsimony. The …t now and then, and not be …ich flows spontaneously. Mr. …e splendour or the pathos …holding himself too severely …f ironic commentary upon it. …e, that he has given adequate …llowing lines from *The Voice*

…s its listlessness
…s dead to me here,
… to listlessness,
… or near;

…tlessness, the language is …sion: the expression of the …lost its intensity, and does …e we crave for. It is no …ult. It is Mr. Hardy's …that there are very many …ses and vibrates under a …choes and reverberates …. If his poems do not …ll our hearts with their …that their coldness is …e stars; Mr. Hardy is …s light is that of far- …a constant neighbour

…n is therefore native …ary corollary to his …must be accepted as …forms not a Shelley. …effect that he gains …his volume wherever you …y literary result the method …is power of description—in …minds a picture, life-like, …—he is frequently great and …poet, certainly by none now …rate in detail as he is com- …r an atmosphere; responsive

…barrows
…morial funeral-piles—
…ally the remains of flint-tipt

…les;—

…ges of meditative nature-
…dearest springs in his poetic

…ages of description, Mr. …s not lie in the picturesque or …not describe a scene, however

…When the Present has latched its p…

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Times Literary Supplement

18.12.19.

SOME EMENDATIONS IN THE POETRY OF MR. HARDY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—In the first volume of his "Literary Recreations" the late Sir Edward Cook has a fascinating paper on the second thoughts in certain poets. Specimens are there given of emendations in Coleridge, Tennyson, FitzGerald, Myers, Rossetti, Mathew Arnold, Keats, and Wordsworth; but although the list, for the purpose of illustrating this delicate art, could scarcely have been improved, the work of a living poet, "the greatest of the tribe now left among us," might have provided some instructive examples. It is true that the study of emendations may degenerate into an offensive eccentricity and become, in the words of Boyle, "next after anagrams and acrostics the lowest diversion a man can betake himself to;" but it is not without its legitimate interest. When it is "no longer a question of choice between the guesses of scholars and pedants at what a poet might, could, would, or should have written," but "a choice between two or more versions all of which he did write," I think it justifies Sir Edward Cook's claim that it becomes a true "exercise in taste with the poet himself for master." A knowledge of the intellectual process by which a poem has advanced to perfection has appeared to many skilled critics (Johnson among the number) a matter of great importance. Mr. Hardy's poetry contains a number of notable emendations, and it is somewhat remarkable that (with the exception of a single brief reference to changes made in "Moments of Vision") they have escaped the critical attention of your own and every other reviewer. It has been justly observed that the chief characteristics of Hardy's poetry are simplicity and intensity: it is hammered out, but it is hammered out fine. Because it "clings with minute fidelity to the author's precise meaning," harsh discords and the use of intolerable words have frightened away many a reader before the hidden spell has had time to work upon him. But although Mr. Hardy's "masterly rectitude and self-reliance" forbid him to modify the significance of his poems in the search for verbal felicities, he has laboured to remove obscure and uncouth expressions wherever he could do so without damage to the sense.

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In graveyard green, behind his monument,
To glimpse a phantom parent, friend,
Wearing his smile, and "Not the end!"
Out-breathing softly: that were blest enlightenment.

I did not see that there was a possibility of a trivial suggestion there, until Mr. Hardy changed the first line into "Graveyard green, where his pale dust lies pent."

The savage irony of certain philosophical poems, on a re-reading, may have appeared to him almost insupportable. However this may be, he has modified it here and there, and in place of utter hopelessness has occasionally allowed us to see some further glimpses on the horizon of "that small light—swelling somewhat." Of this tendency the emendation in the last stanza of "A Meeting with Despair" is a good example, and a reference to the concluding line of "Nature's Questioning" will supply another indication.

For patience and dignity of spirit Mr. Hardy has never achieved anything finer than "The Impercipient (At a Cathedral Service)." I give the opening lines in their original form and as re-written;

That from this bright believing band
An outcast I should be.
(2) That with this bright believing band
I have no claim to be.

In "The Bride-Night Fire" (re-named) one or two dialect words are removed, but its author is chary of retouching this fine poem. There are some felicitous changes in the conclusion of the early tale of the "Two Men," which Mr. Gosse says: "might be the skeleton-scenario for a whole elaborate novel." The last stanza of "Zermatt" as re-written shows us how the poet is sometimes so involved in awkward preterite endings ("dst" three times in the one stanza) that it becomes impossible for him to straighten out the muddle. But I must bring my notes on the Wessex poems to an end, or the later volumes will be crowded out of this letter; perhaps I may take "The Well-Beloved" as a final case. Here a line of perfect bathos (it has already been selected for unfavourable comment by Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie) remains standing, though there are other alterations and a most happy change in the penultimate stanza:

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"The Millgate Monthly"

March. 1920 —7

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Were foodless not at all,
And fragile folk might be here
That white winds bid depart;
Then one I used to see here
Would warm my wasted heart!

One frail, who bravely tilling
Long hours in gripping gusts,
Was mastered by their chilling,
And now his ploughshare rusts.

So savage winter catches
The breath of limber things,
And what I love he snatches,
And what I love not brings.

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And broods in secret o'er those deeper thoughts
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January, 1920.

MS.

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Times Literary Supplement
18.12.19.

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TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

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The "Wessex Poems" and "Poems of the Past and Present" are particularly rich in interesting examples of his fastidious care. "The Alarm" contains important alterations in the second stanza, which has now become satisfactory rhymed narrative. Mr. Gosse has said that the poet "for his in-

verses [illegible]
One, in particular, [illegible]
it will supply an emendation [illegible]
importance:

In graveyard green, behind his monument,
To glimpse a phantom parent, friend,
Wearing his smile, and "Not the end!"
Out-breathing softly: that were blest enlightenment.

I did not see that there was a possibility of a trivial suggestion there, until Mr. Hardy changed the first line into "Graveyard green, where his pale dust lies pent."

The savage irony of certain philosophical poems, on a re-reading, may have appeared to him almost insupportable. However this may be, he has modified it here and there, and in place of utter hopelessness has occasionally allowed us to see some further glimpses on the horizon of "that small light—swelling somewhat." Of this tendency the emendation in the last stanza of "A Meeting with Despair" is a good example, and a reference to the concluding line of "Nature's Questioning" will supply another indication.

For patience and dignity of spirit Mr. Hardy has never achieved anything finer than "The Impercipient (At a Cathedral Service)." I give the opening lines in their original form and as re-written;

That from this bright believing band
An outcast I should be.
(2) That with this bright believing band
I have no claim to be.

In "The Bride-Night Fire" (re-named) one or two dialect words are removed, but its author is chary of retouching this fine poem. There are some felicitous changes in the conclusion of the early tale of the "Two Men," which Mr. Gosse says: "might be the skeleton-scenario for a whole elaborate novel." The last stanza of "Zermatt" as re-written shows us how the poet is sometimes so involved in awkward preterite endings ("dst" three times in the one stanza) that it becomes impossible for him to straighten out the muddle. But I must bring my notes on the Wessex poems to an end, or the later volumes will be crowded out of this letter; perhaps I may take "The Well-Beloved" as a final case. Here a line of perfect bathos (it has already been selected for unfavourable comment by Mr. Lascelles Abercrombie) remains standing, though there are other alterations and a most happy change in the penultimate stanza:

(1) Thereat she vanished by the Cross
That, entering Kingsbere town,
The two long lanes form, near the fosse
Below the fanciless Down.
(2) Thereat she vanished by the lane
Adjoining Kingsbere town
Near where, men say, once stood the Fane
To Venus, on the Down.

The poignant simplicity of "Unrealized" has been greatly enhanced by the complete rewriting of the last stanza. The architectural lines descriptive of the headstones that are to be set up above the sundered lovers have been dropped out from "In Death Divided." There is a change that must have a very real interest for those who have minutely studied the implications of Mr. Hardy's pessimism in "God's Funeral":—

I did not forget
That what was mourned for I, too, long had prized.

"Long" replaces "once."

In later editions there is a wonderful emendation to be found in "The Haunter," by which at last the poet has secured a single line of the most perfect quality.

(1) Yes, I accompany him to places
Only dreamers know,
Where the shy hares show their faces,
Where the night rooks go;—
(2) Where the shy hares *limp long paces*,
Where the night rooks go;

"The Nineteenth Century"
March. 1920 —?

THE journalist of the *New Statesman*—who until recently has signed his name as "Solomon Eagle"—has been wondering if 1920 will prove itself able to compete in literary importance with the twentieth year of a century ago. The three events of 1820, for example, were the publication of Scott's "Ivanhoe," Shelley's "Prometheus Unbound," and Keats' volume of poems, which included "Isabella" and "The Eve of St. Agnes."

Thomas Hardy's Greatest Works.

Truly a magnificent year; and the present one will have its work cut out even to approach it. What the issue will be we cannot say: all that is apparent, so far, is that with the publication of Mr. Thomas Hardy's "Collected Poems"—at 8s. 6d., by Macmillan and Company—just before the end of last year, we have had a tremendous backing, and ought to have commenced 1920 with every confidence.

There are many people who cannot read anything beyond the novels—that most glorious series which places Mr. Hardy among the first novelists in our language. But apart from the fact that the poems are even greater work, there is a magic in most of them that is of the utmost simplicity, for it is claimed that Mr. Hardy's poetry is difficult and obscure. Let us quote, for instance, from that beautiful lyric of two old folk "long plighted," whom circumstances have kept at dalliance until it is too late:—

Is it worth while, dear, now
To call for bells, and sally forth arrayed
For marriage rites—discussed, descried, delayed
So many years? . . .

Is it worth while, dear, when
The day being so far spent, so low the sun,
The undone thing will soon be as the done,
And smiles as tears?

[illegible] we | in fact scarcely

Is it worth while, dear, when
Our cheeks are worn, our early brown is grey;
When, meet or part we, none says yea or nay,
Or heeds, or cares? . . .

Is it worth while, dear, since
As mates in Mellstock churchyard we can lie,
Till the last crash of all things low and high
Shall end the spheres?

The greater the artist, the greater the discipline. In Mr. Hardy's case this discipline has resulted in a marvellous economy of language. Piece after piece in this collected edition, I have long felt, must have been the result of prodigious and painstaking labour, during which every word was tested over and over again before being accepted or dismissed. The other day this was confirmed, out of his own editorial experience, by the chief of our foremost literary weekly, who described to me how, a few months ago, Mr. Hardy had written a poem for him, and returned proof after proof with so many corrections that each proof was practically a new poem! Only after five such revisions did word come from the author that no further proof was needed.

This economy—the gift of all greatness in any direction—can be observed most adequately in a poem like "The Farm-woman's Winter," which I choose for an illustration, not so much for any uniqueness, but because it is one of the briefest:—

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. . .

(continued article on [illegible])

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Was ever a description more exquisitely realistic! But this line has again engaged the poet's attention and "limp long paces" has given way to "print long paces," which, for one, cannot consider an improvement. The ending of the poem is much revised.

The concluding stanza of the five entitled "A Poet" in the "Satires of Circumstance" was originally written thus:—

Whatever the message he to tell,
Two thoughtful women loved him well.
Stand and say that amid the dim:
It will be praise enough for him.

I cannot doubt that the version in the collected edition is in every way superior. "Glad or grim" is surely a happy substitution for "his to tell," and while the epithet "bright-souled" is charming, there is a faint suggestion of priggishness about the "two thoughtful women" who appreciated their poet in every mood. Two prosaic stanzas of matter-of-fact detail are dropped from "The Obliterate Tomb." A characteristic one is added, in which the hereditary enemy, anxious to renew the names on the tombstone of his foes, is made to doubt if indeed their descendant (who threatened to forestall him in this last charity) was not, after all, a ghost like the "phantoms of the ensepulchred" that appeared to him at his first visit.

The impression of time's pitiless progress is most happily conveyed in "The Ageing House" by the epithets applied to the sycamore tree for the first time. It was "the little sycamore tree" when "a fair fresh head would often lean from the sunny casement"; but now that "the head has aged That once looked out," it has become "the long-limbed sycamore tree." The offending stanza in the "Aged Goldfinch," which caused some not unnatural merriment on its first publication, has disappeared; but it becomes a question if without it the piece is worth keeping. I will close by calling attention to the two or three cases in which it seems to me Mr. Hardy's second thoughts have not been equally felicitous. "The Pedestrian" now has, in the second line, "nox venit" for "the night gets dense"—surely a queer way of accosting an unknown traveller! In "Great Things" the swing is spoilt by the substitution in two places of "greatest" for "great." I suppose few persons of taste will consider that the dramatic force of the Moon's answer, in Mr. Hardy's finest apostrophe to her, is improved by the change of "God means surely to shut up soon" to "God ought surely," &c. But, above all, I regret that the poet has gone far to spoil "Afterwards," that noble valediction, through a quite excessive modesty. Although I have only touched the fringe of the subject, it is a pleasure to me, convinced that the collation of Hardy's poems will have an absorbing interest to a future generation of men of letters, to point out instances of his fine finish and fastidious care. These selections may, perhaps, do something to sustain the recorded opinion of Mr. Gosse that Mr. Hardy has become a virtuoso in the last volumes of his poetry.

Yours,
RALPH EDWARDS.

Tredington Rectory, Shipston-on-Stour.

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Drawn by Bert Thomas. "London Opinion."

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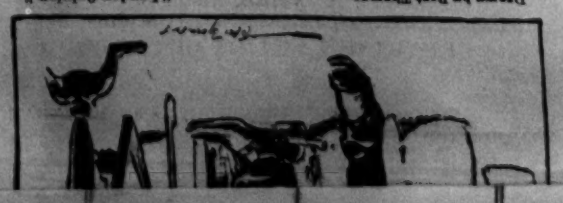

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THE PRIZE TRANSLATIONS.

A POEM OF THE TRENCHES.

HERE in the presence of these men to-day
Let us uncover as is meet before them,
Knowing ourselves unworthy thus to stay,
Loving our France in these her sons, as they
Worshipped in reverence deep the land that bore them.

Under the bonnet with the gay rosette,
Or heavy cap of stalwart guardsman wearing,
Under the shako of the soldier yet,
And trusty helmet of the "poilu" set,
Next morn perchance the vintage basket bearing.

She is a land the stranger may not know,
Bare and austere like soil 'neath plough upturning,
Troubled in heart by vaunting pomp and show
She welcomes hidden sentiments that glow,
The noble deeds in secret ardour burning.

Mother and Country! Words of sacred worth
She utters not, nor boasts in song or story;
Like steadfast labourer of humble birth,
Her simple valour shines to crown the earth
As a strong tower of noble strength and glory.

E. C. LEITH.

THE POEM OF THE TRENCHES.

COMRADES of war!—accept our reverent love
As we salute you with the homage due
To sons of glorious France, for in your deeds
We see our country's self, steadfast and true.

To-day, beneath the battered old tricorne,
Or shako of our valiant infantry,
Or guards' own heavy cap; ah! true to-day
Beneath the soldier's hat of Burgundy.

But on the morrow up the vine-clad slopes
Will climb once more the toiling vintager
Under his wide-brimm'd hat, and home from war
To meads he loves return the wanderer.

This France is little known by foe or friend—
Rugged and bare, with stern eyes and austere,
Like the black soil of freshly-ploughèd fields
When harvest-time has crown'd the fruitful year.

It cuts him off sharply from poets like Swinburne, who exhaust every known trick to get music into their verse, and who in their weaker moments give us music into their verse, and In their stronger moments they knock their heads against the stars. Mr. Hardy's method avoids both their failures and their triumphs. Not for him is their majesty or their prettiness. But however harsh his form may sometimes be, there are few poems of his that do not bear the seal of a masterful personality. They are the work of a masculine intelligence that has brooded long and daringly on problems that would drive many a music-monger silly, and of a heart full of sympathy with every type of man and woman that has travelled this perturbed earth.

Nor indeed is majesty of a austerer kind wanting. It is not the kind arising from sonorous phrase and stately diction clothing with added dignity a thought already dignified: it is not the majesty of Milton or Shakespeare, but something akin to that stern majesty of Wordsworth in such a poem as *The Leech Gatherer*. There are few poets that seem to have at first sight less in common than Wordsworth and Thomas Hardy: Wordsworth mystical, conservative (after his first revolutionary fit had passed), as devoid of humour as a tortoise; Hardy, realistic, eager, master of every kind of humour from philosophic irony to natural heartiness, and breathing Promethean defiance to unheeding gods. Yet one thing they have in common: the gift of endowing the simplest acts of the humblest human being with dignity. Though their conceptions of the universe differ so profoundly, yet they can both bring man under the shadow of things more enduring than himself. This is the miracle that both dwarfs and magnifies—to present man *sub specie eternitatis*.

There is much talk of the depressing nature of Mr. Hardy's philosophy, but critics seem curiously shy of entering into its details. We do not know what particular label Mr. Hardy would choose, and we think it not unlikely that he may dislike labels altogether. Nevertheless they have their use, and at times their fascination. The present writer confesses to a thrill upon hearing that a certain person was a Muggletonian, though he had but a vague notion of what that arresting name meant. In the same way we fancy some are thrilled on hearing Mr. Hardy described as an agnostic or a pessimist. Both these words have, unhappily, become part and parcel of common speech, which is another way of saying that they have lost all pretentions to definition and accuracy. The doctrine of an 'all-immanent Will' which appears in poem after poem suggest something more allied to pantheism than to the opinions now loosely classed as 'agnostic.' But as this 'all-immanent Will' is conceived by Mr. Hardy

as apparently only attaining to self-consciousness when incarnated in man, it is obvious this semi-pantheism owes much to Schopenhauer and his *World as Representation and Will*. We see no injustice in describing Mr. Hardy as a pessimist, though we are not sure he would found his pessimism on the same metaphysical basis as Schopenhauer does. In his poems it appears as springing rather from an emotional source—from his intense sympathy with the sufferings of all living things. And here we come up against a fact of singular interest to the student of human nature. In Schopenhauer's philosophy there is provided at the eleventh hour an escape from the sense of the misery of life through the open door of mysticism. But Thomas Hardy can find no such escape. He stands with folded arms before a closed door in stoical resignation. Yet it was Schopenhauer who remained to the end a crabbed and cynical recluse, while Hardy stands revealed in his poems as a great brotherly soul full of the milk of human kindness.

Perhaps this brotherliness is the final impression his poems leave upon us. Great as is his intellectual stature, he always conveys to us a feeling of common humanity. In this he is like Shakespeare. We shall not go to him as we go to Shelley, to get a glimpse into a rarer, super-sensual world, nor as we go to Keats, to get a vision of Beauty, perfect and complete. We shall go to him that we may feel more keenly our tie of common blood with suffering men and women. It is true no amount of sympathy can compensate for the absence of art in the making of a poem, but there is no lack of art here. What one artist achieves through elaboration, another achieves through simplicity. *A Sunday Morning Tragedy*, in which there is not one word or thought to strain the apprehension of the dullest, is a perfect piece of craftmanship of its kind, and goes to its mark like an arrow. *The Haunter* is more subtle, yet simplicity is still the note, and the description of an affection still potent after death is so delicate, yet so direct, that we can recall nothing in English literature quite like it.

"He does not think that I haunt here nightly:
How shall I let him know
That whither his fancy sets him wandering
I, too, alertly go.

Hover and hover a few feet from him
Just as I used to do,
But cannot answer the words he lifts me—
Only listen thereto!

. . .

Yes, I companion him to places
Only dreamers know,
Where the shy hares print long paces,
Where the night rooks go;
Into old aisles where the past is all to him,
Close as his shade can do,
Always lacking the power to call to him;
Near as I reach thereto.

Those who speak of Thomas Hardy as wanting in ideality may well pause before such a poem as this.

Realism is of course the prevailing note of Thomas Hardy's poems as it is of his novels. But there are many kinds of realism. That of Zola is one, that of Tolstoi and Dostoieffsky is another. There is the realism of Baudelaire, fleshly yet fantastic; there is the realism of Burns, robust and smiling; Mr. Hardy's is unlike either. He walks with his feet firmly planted on the earth, listening to the tales of fate-wronged men and of women who have lost all for love. He listens with sympathy; but always believed behind these mortal figures we see the vast background of cosmic forces. The tragedy of it all appals him: he questions the abyss and receives no answer. He is on the verge of tears, but pulls himself together and takes refuge in irony.

Now irony, as Sir Gilbert Murray subtly says, 'is the mood of one who has some strong emotion within but will not quite trust himself on the flood of it.' It is the mood of the man who is at once sensitive and self-controlled. Murray is speaking of Euripides, and there is much in Thomas Hardy that makes us think of the old Greek poet. Both prefer simplicity to ornament, and both can make of simplicity a mighty artistic instrument. Like Euripides, Mr. Hardy often finds himself up against religious traditions and time-honoured social ideas, and had he been an old Athenian it is easy to picture him as ending his days an exile. And like Euripides, he is ever deeply moved by the misfortunes of women, and like him he receives as reward the execrations of the Pharisee. But their deepest community is in their mode of tragic irony, when smiles are often more terrible than tears.

Mr. Hardy is a difficult poet to quote from. He has no jewelled lines which sparkle even when torn from their context. Every line is part of an organic whole, but few are memorable by themselves, and most of the poems are too long to quote in their entirety. One long poem we have already referred to—*A Sunday Morning Tragedy*—is in its tense pity and grim irony of circumstance one of the most wonderful poems in

the language. Surely Aristotle's dictum as to the function of tragedy is here fulfilled. We trust that no afterglow of Early Victorian squeamishness will ever stand in the way of its taking its proper place in every anthology worthy of the name.

The poem *To the Moon* comes as a surprise in its dainty tripping rhymes and raises again the question how far Mr. Hardy's usual want of music is deliberate or involuntary. The delicate bitterness of its spirit is made all the more effective by the airy lightness of its form.

"What have you looked at, Moon,
In your time,
Now long past your prime?"
"O, I have looked at, often looked at
Sweet, sublime,
Sore things, shudderful, night and noon,
In my time."

"What have you mused on, Moon,
In your day,
So aloof, so far away?"
"O, I have mused on, often mused on
Growth, decay,
Nations alive, dead, mad, aswoon,
In my day."

"Have you much wondered, Moon,
On your rounds,
Self-wrapt, beyond Earth's bounds?"
"Yes, I have wondered, often wondered
At the sounds
Reaching me of the human tune
On my rounds."

"What do you think of it, Moon,
As you go?
Is Life much or no?"
"O, I think of it, often think of it
As a show
God ought surely to shut up soon
As I go."

It does not seem a very cheerful view of life, yet the poet must carry within him a strongly-rooted joy who can write of his old age thus:—

"In the seventies I was bearing in my breast,
Penned tight,
Certain starry thoughts that threw a magic light
On the worktimes and the soundless hours of rest
In the seventies; aye, I bore them in my breast
Penned tight.

In the seventies those who met me did not know
Of the vision
That immuned me from the chillings of misprision,
And the damps that choked my goings to and fro
In the seventies; yea, those nodders did not know
Of the vision.

In the seventies nought could darken or destroy it,
Locked in me,
Though as delicate as lamp-worm's lucency;
Neither mist nor murk could weaken or alloy it
In the seventies; could not darken or destroy it
Locked in me."

And so as in the parable, out of the strong came sweetness, out of the sombre genius of Thomas Hardy comes the abiding joy. For he is a poet, and like every poet, he sees the magic light and the vision that can keep a man young until the day that death shall claim him. E. F.

(Edwin Faulkner.)

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journalist of the *New Statesman*—who cently has signed his name as "Solomon —has been wondering if 1920 will prove itself able to compete in literary importance with the twentieth year of a century ago. The three events of 1820, for example, were the publication of

D'Urbervilles" takes a lot of beating. Of one hundred-and-fifty-eight pieces in "Moments of Vision," for example, quite half of them are, rawly and without symbolism, poems on subjects that would have delighted the heart of Mr. Gummidge. Thirty-two are of death or dead wives, twenty-five of ghosts, spirits, apparitions, phantoms, spectres, or wraiths—Mr. Hardy observes the subtle distinction—four of skeletons or corpses, or newly mouldering bodies, and, to cap all, a round dozen on such an entertaining department of human activity, or inactivity, as a churchyard!

Truly, it is significant of the heritage which the Victorian era bequeathed to us that our great poet should find his material in such doleful quarters! To be quite fair, however, it

Th: Hardy. by A. Symons -

he character, the action of the man is rendered with an for which our painters and poets strive all their lives. edimenta of the endlessly complicated art of Europe has, ıter decades, proved such a hindrance to the expression of ple and powerful ideas that it is small wonder if many men to throw off the load—and if they delight in the work of , whose swift, sensitive line and grasp of composition ults near enough to our own for us to understand them,— enough from our inbred art to give us the special pleasure es from things that are new to us. Familiar or strange, the s work is beautiful, and in quite the sense of the word that always given to it. The black pottery of the Santa Clara s not the measureless refinement that, in centuries of con- ılture, brought perfection to the Egyptian vases of the sties, but it has the vigour and largeness of design of the period of the art of Egypt. And to-day—I come back to because what is most important to remember is that this being produced—certain head-dresses, batons, and fig- the religious ceremonies flame with a magnificence of red such as the Hopi country shows in daylight, or glow in of white and gray, like the desert under the stars.

152 West Thirteenth Street
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THE ATTACHED APPEARED IN
THE DIAL
JAN -- 1920
ISSUE OF

AS HARDY

IUR SYMONS

Hardy—who arrived at the ag
—reached me in the Isle of Wig
ously he is alive.

11th May, 1919.
Max Gate, Dorchest

London only four or five ays
nds I am settled down he ag
and unable to meet you as you kindly propose. A chance y
later on.

London was not attractive, the crowds in the streets and
being wearisome to one no longer young.

Very truly yours,
THOMAS HA

Reading his letter recalled to me the wonderful week I s
him at Max Gate, Dorchester. He took me all over th
ancient and unspoiled Egdon Heath that comes with s
tragic splendour into The Return of the Native. And
me, at night, his verses, there was in his voice something
obscure, tremulous, half-inarticulate, that of one who
over man, nature and destiny; and also, in the man and
he spoke, that quality which saves his face, in which ye
brain always working, from being painful by a humour
of external things which becomes also a kind of intelle
cism. One of his poems curiously impressed me: An Au
night, crabbed, subtle, and strangely dramatic.

Hardy was always very generous in his praise of my v
one of his letters in regard to The Dynasts what I sh
gives a curious insight into his vivid intelligence. "You
that verse should be confined to emotional expression is wh

hold, and was very uncomfortable under. (I believe that a good many hold it now besides yourself.) What settled it for me was a super-imposed theory, or view; namely, the theory of contiguity, if I may use such a word for it; by which I mean that unemotional writing which has no claim of itself to verse-form may properly be admitted into verse from its nearness to emotional verse in the same piece. Leave alone plays, some of our best lyrics are not lyrical every moment throughout, but the neutral lines are warmed by the remainder. I would even hold that one of Pope's coldest essays in verse would be legitimate as such, if it were a section of a large emotional poem, and not an independent piece."

I shall concern myself here with one of his books of verse and with The Dynasts. In Poems of the Past and Present almost every line has something to say, and says it in a slow, twisted, and sometimes enigmatic manner, without obvious charm, but with some arresting quality, not easy to define or to estimate. It is a grey book, with sad-coloured landscapes, its outlook on the race of Portland Hill, that "engulphing, sinister, ghost place," and on "puzzled phantoms" questioning

> "What of logic or of truth appears
> In tacking Anno Domini to the years."

In his verse there is something brooding, obscure, half-inarticulate, as he meditates on men and destiny. In one of his poems, an ironical song of science, Nature laments that her best amusement, man, has become discontented with her in his self-discontent. Dumb and blind forces speak, conjecture, half awakening out of sleep, turning back lazily to sleep again. Here is a poet who is sorry for nature, who feels the earth and its roots, as if he had sap in his veins instead of blood, and could get closer than any other man to the things of the earth. There is an atmosphere not easily to be found outside this book, a mysterious, almost terrifying atmosphere which one finds again in the phantom love-poems, the phantom war-poems, and in certain reflective verses. Abstract thought takes form in some given symbol, as in The Church-Builder, with its architectural imagery, its deliberate building up of spiritual horror. Nearly the whole book shivers with winter.

Poems, Vol. II., *The Dynasts*; ea. 8s. 6d. net. Macmillan.

simply realistic. He does not describe a scen

"The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I,"

he tells us in The Darkling Thrush, which is a kind of pe parable.

It is his melancholy severity that gives much of its qualit book otherwise of varying merit. Hardy has never writte flowing rhythms, either in verse or in prose, and his verse ofte or dances in hobnails. But he has studied the technique o more carefully than most of his critics seem to be aware of, has a command of very difficult metres which, if it were unv would be really remarkable. But his command of his mate uncertain. He crowds syllables together inharmoniously. always experimenting in metrical effects, and he has made so fectly successful experiments of a very unusual kind; but he fond of long lines, in which the cadence gets lost by th He sometimes writes gaily and trippingly, as in the delig naughty jingle of The Ruined Maid, which Congreve cou have done better.

Neither in verse nor in prose is Hardy a master of style. prose and in verse he has interesting things to say, and he them in an intensely personal way. He can force words to actly what he wants them to. But their subjection is neve willing, they seem to have spite against him because he is st than they. That is why they have never given him all thei along with their services. Some of their magic remains ov verse does not sing. But so far as it is possible to be a poet w having a singing voice, Hardy is a poet, and a profoundly in ing one.

After Hardy carried out his ambitious design, The Dynas Drama in Three Parts, it was easily seen that his instinct was when he brushed aside the remonstrances of his critics and admi and persisted with his plan of making the Napoleonic era the ject of a vast puppet drama. Those who discouraged his enter and wished instead for another Tess or Jude the Obscure, o that had this world-drama of The Dynasts remained an unrea dream or a fragment, they would have missed a manifestation o

hor's mind and talent which is a singularly expressive work of t. Intimations of his mournful creed are scattered through the vels; no one, for instance, can read such a book as The Return of Native without suspecting that he is in the presence of a con- ned pessimist, or without feeling that for the writer the forces of ure are no less essential characters of his tales than its men and men, and that behind their seeming violences and caprices is purpose of an inscrutable will. Hitherto, however, Hardy's ughts about his race had been revealed more or less uncon- usly. In The Dynasts his gospel of despair is boldly and delib- tely avowed, and forms, as it were, the atmosphere of the tragedy. e increase of self-expression involves no decrease of architectural ll. A drama covering the career of Napoleon was bound to ge over an enormous field; yet never has Hardy's constructive ius mastered so completely as in his contest with difficulties aris- from mass of material.

The apparatus he employs in connection with these wonderful ies of dissolving views is decidedly original. He is fond of trans- rting his readers to heights in the air whence they can look down the features of countries like so many Gullivers surveying the agi- ions of Lilliput. He makes use, too, of sundry dry supernatural aracters—Recording Angels and Spirits Ironic and Sinister, Spirits the Pities and Spirits of the Years—to comment aloud in choric shion on the pranks of his puppets. He has a way even of turn- g X-rays, so to speak, upon the stage-crowds to show "brain-tissues the Immanent Will" pervading them all, and influencing them achieve its blind purposes. This machinery is serviceable so far as affords us bird's-eye glances at battles and campaigns and the ovements of huge military forces—in so far as it spreads out be- ath our feet a relief map of that arena of Europe on which the rama of Napoleon's life was played. It has its disadvantage in hat the author often keeps us too far away from the actors to allow f our regarding them as fellow-creatures, and also exacts from us n almost impossible attitude of neutrality.

But not even Hardy can keep up the pose of aloofness which he emands from the student of his play. By degrees the philosopher urns into the sympathetic observer, the pessimist gives place to the ndignant humourist; and except when his choruses express the hope- ess litany of fatalism, his scenes grow warm with natural emotion.

..., Vol. II., *The Dynasts*; ea. 8s. 6d. net. Macmillan.

Each passage is happily selected to contribute its share to the gen plan; each is a miniature drama in itself, with its own plot and max; and it is only the stage directions, as a rule, that remind spectator that he is "sitting up aloft." At the end of the drama author tries to set all his scenes in proper focus, and to relate the eternity—exhibits all the fret and fuss of the Napoleonic pag as a wrinkle on the face of Time, and Bonaparte himself as b "plaything in the hands of the Immortals." Fortunately Ha cannot long deal with human nature without forgetting his the in his sense of kinship. For though he may show us from some p in mid-air the Grand Army crawling "like a dun-piled caterpill back to shame and disintegration from Moscow, he takes us c enough to see all the horrors of that retreat—its episode of gal soldiers abandoned and driven mad by hunger and frost on t plains of Lithuania. If, again, we watch from the clouds moves in the game of war, such as the Peninsular campaign, we permitted to descend and sit by the deathbed of Josephine, and given in that scene poetry of an exceeding poignancy. Lastly, wh Hardy can conjure before us in their due perspective the m nœuvres and mutations of the struggle at Waterloo, he allows him self to turn aside from the clash of battle and present a delight picture of old-world Wessex in which "Boney" is burnt in effigy.

The blank verse of the play is not remarkable; it is of the facil jog-trot sort, and some indication of its facility is afforded by t fact that it is employed to paraphrase a debate in the House of Co mons. Once, however, it rises to heights of eloquence and pathos the speech put into the mouth of the dying Josephine. Otherwis is in the lyrical snatches—in the Wessex girl's song for instan My Love's Gone A-fighting, that Hardy's muse is happiest. S things as that remind one that it is not only by the wide sweep of imagination, but also by the occasional capacity he evinces for g ing perfect expression to a mood, that the author of The Dyna may call himself a poet.

THOMAS HARDY'S POEMS.

By E. W. Edmunds, M.A., B.Sc.
(Author of "The Story of English Literature," "Shelley and His Poetry," etc.)

I.

THE appearance of a collected edition of Mr. Hardy's poems* is an almost startling reminder of the large volume of verse which he has to bring to the altar of the Muses. We are so accustomed to regard him as the supreme master of modern fiction that we are apt to overlook the undoubted fact that he is a very considerable poet. At the same time we have no right to such surprise as we may have felt. The poetic element is embodied in his best novels in every way but that of form.

His wooing of the tragic muse is as conspicuous in the one form as the other. His control over a moment or episode of dramatic significance, and of the language suitable to it, is so just in his prose, and so exact, that we have the right to look for a successful exercise of the same power in verse. And our expectation will not be unrealised.

Mr. Hardy's poems have been written at many periods of his life, but they show remarkably little evidence of the fact. The same mood prevails throughout, and there is little sign of development even of his metrical powers. The mood is that mood of ironical pessimism, that sense of humanity as the sport of circumstance, that helpless subservience to a Will whose purposes have no relation to the feelings or virtues of individuals, which informs the novels. His careful expression of a single point of view makes for intensity and power in the handling of the poems; but the cumulative effect of the unbroken series of gloomy vignettes is so disagreeable that we are likely to do them less than justice. We grant that Mr. Hardy is a great novelist, in spite of his tragic outlook on life, because the novels have a background which makes the gloom of the picture less overwhelming; we cannot, without some analysis, with equal certainty, allow him greatness as a poet.

We have said that Mr. Hardy's poems are astonishingly uniform in their texture and in their treatment. It would be difficult, upon the internal evidence of style and subject alone, to find any note of immaturity in the first volume of *Wessex Poems*, or any relatively more highly-developed art than the later *Lyrics and Reveries*, or *Satires of Circumstance*. Perhaps the ironic agnosticism of his religious outlook grows a trifle harder and more relentless, but it would be difficult to make such an impression absolute. The first two poems he gives us are *The Temporary The All* and *Amabel*, dated 1865. They are as mature, as characteristic of the poet's vision, as any two poems in the book.

> I felt that I could creep
> To some housetop and weep
> That time, the tyrant fell,
> Ruled Amabel!

One could hardly find lines more representative of Mr. Hardy's vein—his prevalent vein of wistful melancholy brooding over the shadows of human life—than these. And in their sheer simplicity of language, in their severe economy of words, they are characteristic, too. Mr. Hardy, in his most poignant moments, is never fulsome or rhetorical, never verbose or exaggerated; few and weighty are the words he uses; and they are pared to the very minimum, so that we are often caught in doubt whether emotion so suppressed and concise can form the staple of lyrical poetry at all. Here, as in the novels, Mr. Hardy is a realist without embroidery, without romance; and sometimes Nemesis overtakes him, so that his diction becomes as stark and bare as if it were totally uninspired. A poet can sacrifice too much to economy: it easily slides into a niggardly parsimony. The great lyrist will open his heart now and then, and not be contemptuous of the music which flows spontaneously. Mr. Hardy too frequently loses the splendour or the pathos of his emotional situation, by holding himself too severely in leash, and by his attitude of ironic commentary upon it. We can hardly say, for example, that he has given adequate music to the emotion of the following lines from *The Voice* (1912):—

> Or is it only the breeze, in its listlessness
> Travelling across the wet mead to me here,
> You being ever dissolved to existlessness,
> Heard no more again far or near?

Apart from the jarring word, existlessness, the language is too flat and awkward for the occasion: the expression of the strong feeling is not lyrical, it has lost its intensity, and does not at once touch the chords that we crave for. It is no lack of power that causes this result. It is Mr. Hardy's method. And we must state fairly that there are very many poems in which his austere muse pulses and vibrates under a strain of tense passion which re-echoes and reverberates through the very depths of our souls. If his poems do not often flame into fire, if they often chill our hearts with their passionless irony, it must be answered that their coldness is akin to that in the spaces beyond the stars; Mr. Hardy is an interpreter of the night-heavens: his light is that of far-off suns, frozen in the firmament; he is a constant neighbour of the Invisible.

The condensed method of expression is therefore native to Mr. Hardy's genius, and a necessary corollary to his authentic and serious vision of life. It must be accepted as an essential part of him: he is neither a Burns nor a Shelley. But with all its limitations, how fine the effect that he gains often is. Turn over the leaves of his volume wherever you will, and you will find that in purely literary result the method is something more than fertile. In power of description—in the power of bringing before our minds a picture, life-like, vivid, true in detail and in effect—he is frequently great and scarcely to be surpassed by any poet, certainly by none now living. He is an observer as accurate in detail as he is competent to suggest an impression or an atmosphere; responsive sensitively to nature, as in:—

> Round about me bulged the barrows
> As before, in antique silence—immemorial funeral-piles—
> Where the sleek herds trampled daily the remains of flint-tipt arrows
> Mid the thyme and chamomiles;—

and in numberless similar passages of meditative nature-painting, which reveal one of the clearest springs in his poetic gift.

Yet, with all his fine passages of description, Mr. Hardy's greatest success does not lie in the picturesque or simply realistic. He does not describe a scene, however

*The Complete Poetical Works of Thomas Hardy; vol. i., Collected Poems, vol. ii., The Dynasts; ea. 8s. 6d. net. Macmillan.

> "When the Present has latched its postern behind ... tremulous stay,
> And the May moth flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
> Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,
> Have ceased to notice such things'?

later work. ... reproductive, adding weight rather than value to earlier inventions. But in the case of Hardy it is the later work that would be sacrificed if surrender ... All his songs are, in Blake's phrase, ... work was ...

A few more terms used in furrier's English remain to be mentioned. If a broad, short skin is required to be narrower and longer, it is "dropped," by making long zig-zag incisions across the skin and "dropping" one part to a lower level before sewing; a proceeding that really requires a diagram for its lucid explanation. Pelts, of which the hair is of a short pile, sometimes show a mark wherever a seam occurs; to obviate this the cuts are made in short zig-zags, so that the seam does not appear as a straight line drawn across the skin. Such a seam is called a "vandyke," a term most probably to be traced to the name of the celebrated Dutch artist whose pictures show such an amount of zig-zag edged lace, which gave the adjective "vandyked" to many nouns.

Furs are not always what they seem. Hare-"bellies" often masquerade as white fox, the "belly" of a pelt being the part covering the belly of the animal. Naturally, when a skin is slit open along the belly, the latter is converted into two "sides." Squirrel-bellies are sewn together in large numbers until a sheet big enough to line a cloak is obtained. To such a lining the name "squirrel lock," or merely "lock," is given; but I have been unable to trace its derivation.

Many furs bear names that would be sought for in vain in any book on Natural History; the animal not always bequeathing its name to the pelt. "Astrakhan" and "Persian" are self-explanatory. "Caracul" (not to be confounded with caracal, the Persian lynx) is merely an Oriental sheep-skin, while "broadtail" is a freak form of Persian or Astrakhan. The broad fork-shaped marking in the skunk-skin is called the "white." The once royal fur "miniver" or "minever" (Fr. *menu* from L. *minutus*, small, and Fr. *vair* from L. *Uarius*, spotted or variegated), was simply pure white ermine plentifully dotted with black spots obtained from the tip of the animal's tail. The word is to be traced to Latin through French. In M.E. we find it as *meniuer*, and in Piers Plowman as *menyuere*. The route followed by the term was through Anglo-Fr. *meniver* from O.Fr. *menu ver*, Cotgrave (1660) saying "*menu ver, ou verk*, the furre minever, also the beast that bears it." The same lexicographer gives the variant spelling *menu vair* = "minever, the furre of ermins mixed or spotted with the furre of the weesell called *gris*." Cotgrave also has *vair* as meaning "a rich fur of ermins powdered thick with blue hairs." None of the examples of miniver, sufficiently rare nowadays, that have come to my notice have possessed anything like a powdering of "blue hairs," the fur being exactly like ordinary the ermine with black tail-points as we know it to-day. "Nutria" is the name of another kind of fur not to be found in the vocabulary of the zoologist. It is the skin of the South American coypu, a kind of swamp-beaver. The term is probably connected with the L. *lutra*, an otter (*lutria* in Aelfric's Glossary, *ca.* 975).

The rest of the fur-bearing animals give their names to the pelts, and the etymologies of some of them are quite interesting. North America gives us a number. Such a one is *racoon* or *raccoon*, a corruption of the native Indian name, which in Strachey's *Historie of Travaile into Virginia* (*ca.* 1610) is given as "arathkone," while Capt. Smith speaks of it as "a beast they call aroughcun." Another from the same source is *skunk*, Webster saying that it was contracted from the Abenaki *seganku*, which Skeat holds to be an incorrect form of *segongw*. Musquash is the North American Indian name for the musk-rat, and finally, from this source we have *opossum*, the Indian of Virginia using the form *opassom*.

Comparatively few fur-names come from Latin or Greek; among them are lynx, squirrel, and marmot, all of which have been good English for centuries. The latter is the name of an extremely common fur of low quality, its possessor being an animal of the rodent family. It is from either the Italian *marmotto* (*a*), or the French *marmotte*, the Italian word being, according to Torriano a substitution for *marmotana*, a mountain-rat. These, together with several cognate terms, are to be derived from the Romansch *murmont*, from L. *mus*, and *montis*, mountain-mouse. The chinchilla is perhaps the most absurdly named animal in the list; the name being a diminutive of the Spanish *chinche*, a bug, because the skin was, erroneously, supposed to possess an objectionable odour. "Civet" is of Arabian origin: *zabad* or *zubad*, through mediæval Greek to Italian *zibetto*, whence the term travelled through French as *civette*. Sable, already used by Chaucer, has a Slavonic origin, the Russian and Polish being *sobol*. The Low Lat. forms were *sabelum* and *sabelinus*, whence the O.Fr. *sebelin*, M.E. *sabeline*, and Mod.Fr. (under Italian influence) *zibeline*. Black sables are looked upon as the best, and from this circumstance the word came to signify "black" in heraldry.

The marten bears a name of Teutonic origin, and is found in England in 1577 (W. Harrison, *A Description of England, etc.*), as *martern*, the M.E. word for the fur being *martryn*. This adjectival form is borrowed from O.Fr. *martrin* (Godefroi). In XVth century England the spelling of the noun was *marter*, or *martre* (Caxton); the Teutonic original was *marth-uz*, with the Low Latin *martur* lying between them. The furrier knows two varieties—the stone-marten and the baum-marten or pine-marten (Ger. *baum* = tree). Ermine, already found in M.E. as *ermyne* or *ermin*, is directly from the O.Fr. *ermine*, Anglo-Fr. *hermine*, from O.H.G. *harmin* (the Mod.Ger. *ermelin* is from Low Lat. *armelinus*). The ermine, by the way, is not a distinct animal zoologically, but merely a stoat in its winter-dress. "Mink" is the name of a member of the weasel family, and is from the Low Ger. *mink*, *menke*, a sort of otter; the animal we call mink is dubbed in German *nerz*. "Rabbit" is a word of unknown origin. It is present in M.E. as *rabet*, and is found in Walloon as *robett* from Dutch *robbe*. The older name for the animal is "coney," used by the furrier to designate the sheared and dyed rabbit imitating seal; it is derived *viâ* the Anglo-Fr. *conil*, and O.Fr. *connil*, from Lat. *cuniculus*, a rabbit.

The remainder of the animals whose fur is of commercial value, such as the hare, mole, wolf, fox, bear, otter, seal, and beaver, bear purely English names, and it is unnecessary to trace their derivations in an article such as this which treats of the furrier's special English. Enough has been said to show that the furrier uses a vocabulary of very respectable antiquity, quite in keeping with the age of his craft, and that a study of his terms is one of absorbing interest.

Johnson on Pastoral Poetry.

There is something in the poetical Arcadia so remote from known reality and speculative possibility that we can never support its representation through a long work. A pastoral of an hundred lines mya be endured, but who will hear of sheep and goats, and myrtle bowers and purling rivulets, through five acts? Such scenes please barbarians in the dawn of literature, and children in the dawn of life, but will be for the most part thrown away as meen grow wise and nations grow learned.—Dr. Johnson *Life of Gay*.

Truly a magnificent year; and the present

bright and hopeful living as that of hay-makers,

impressive, for its own sake. It is always in association with some human figure—a background for a tragedy, or focus for some meditative reverie; nature is significant when thus drawn into the vortex of human fate; he has no use for storm or megalith except as links in the chain of human destinies, and it is in these blendings of natural description and the mysterious workings of life that his poetical work reaches the artistic level of his best novels.

Few poets are less guilty than Mr. Hardy of the small change of verse. He is not averse from such devices as alliteration, onomatopœia, and the like, but he uses them sparingly and unobtrusively. Tricks of style, such as Meredith delighted in—the tropes and turns of fanciful speech—he eschews; he is too grimly serious for verbal wit; and neither simile nor metaphor intrudes its superior presence self-consciously, though of the latter figure fine examples are not infrequent. But flowery language of all kinds is anathema to Mr. Hardy's severe art; and otiose or merely ornate adjectives are equally rare. His adjectives are generally pregnant and vital, weighted with indispensable force. His vocabulary is not always simple. He does not recoil from long words, nor even from ugly ones, when they seem to be demanded.

> And this phantasmal variousness
> Ever possessed it as they drew along:
> Yet throughout all it symboled none the less
> Potency vast and loving-kindness strong.

Sometimes it is very difficult to justify his cacophonic Latinisms, such as *inimic, extirp, deicide, cadavers;* or such unusual words as *embranglement, rhythmal, logicless, voidless, tarriance, phasm, cohue.* He is fond of recalling expressive old words or survivals in the dialect he knew so well: *scuts, dumbles, coll, garth, linhay, beneaped, swealed, whindling, leazings,* are a few examples which most people, consulting the necessary dictionary, would find appropriately used. We do not like *fulth,* and see no special advantage in *brume* or *landskip;* but on the whole Mr. Hardy's experiments do add a minor interest to his verse. For the most part he is, as in his prose, content with the expressive parts of an ordinary vocabulary; and when he departs from it he is not always happy. His use of expressive compounds illustrates this point also: in one poem from his *Lyrics and Reveries* we find *coppice-crowned, halo-bedecked, sepulture-clad, body-borne,* all of which are not equally graceful or inspired. He does not bring off so many triumphant *tours de force* as Browning, and the stern simplicity of his diction does not so frequently take to itself wings as Wordsworth's does; on the other hand, he does not so often collapse into flat failure.

On the technical side of his verse, Mr. Hardy must be treated with great respect. He is a careful and accomplished metrist. His feeling for rhythm and his power of controlling a complex musical movement are not so prolific as Swinburne's; he cannot rush along in profuse strains of harmonious song; and he has nothing of the sugary sweetness of Tennyson's art. For all that, his metres are worthy of study. He is not at his best in single lines; but, looking at his poems in their wholeness, we shall find him felicitous in all kinds of lines, long or short, trochaic, iambic, or anapœstic: and the cumulative effect is often fine, even though an occasional variation may be halting or only half appropriate. The author of such a stanza as the following, taken from *The Rash Bride,* cannot be deemed unskilful or inattentive to his metre:—

> We searched till dawn about the house; within the house, without the house;
> We searched among the laurel boughs that grew beneath the wall,
> And then among the crocks and things, and stores for winter junketings,
> In linhay, loft, and dairy; but we found her not at all.

And, as an example in another style, we may quote from *The Robin,* a beautiful little poem in *Moments of Vision*:—

> When up aloft
> I fly and fly,
> I see in pools
> The shining sky
> And a happy bird
> Am I, am I!

Between these metrical extremes there are very many intermediates, not a whit less sufficient and pleasing in their rhythmic movement. But they must be read in their stanza-association if they are to be best appreciated.

The variety of stanza in the collection is much greater than we are fully aware of when reading the poems through, and many of them are exceedingly happy as well as original. As becomes a story-teller, Mr. Hardy used the simple ballad-stanza efficiently, though he has many variations on its typical form, such as Coleridge himself might have created—as thus in *My Cicely*:—

> She lives, in a plenteous well-being,
> To-day as aforehand;
> The dead bore the name—though a rare one—
> The name that bore she. —

in which, it will be noticed, that there are no rimes, as is not uncommon with Mr. Hardy: though in this poem the last line of each stanza carries the same rime throughout the poem. At the other end of the scale, we have frequent examples of the sophisticated terza rima with its carefully interlaced rimes; and a few competently-wrought sonnets, such as "To an Impersonator of Rosalind," in *Time's Laughing-Stocks.* The ingenuity and mastery which Mr. Hardy shows in the building of the stanza can, however, only be appreciated by browsing for an hour or so in any of his volumes. Let us mention a few examples picked up randomly in such a glance: a great plenty must remain for the most delicate connoisseur to find beautiful and fit. Think how the whole tragedy of Tess is reflected in the wailing movement of the stanza of *Tess's Lament,* with its plaintive repetition in the second line:—

> I would that folk forgot me quite,
> Forgot me quite!
> I would that I could shrink from sight,
> And no more see the sun.
> Would it were time to say farewell,
> To claim my nook, to need my knell,
> Time for them all to stand and tell
> Of my day's work as done.

Or, again, read *The Noble Lady's Tale,* and observe a similar effect from a quite different stanza, reminiscent of, but by no means imitating, Shelley:—

> We moved with pensive faces,
> I and he,
> And bent our faded faces
> Wistfully,
> For something troubled him and troubled me.

There are stanzas to suit all emotional situations, in fact: grave and austerely simple as in the lines on the loss of the "Titanic"; rapid and brisk in movement, like the story of Rose Ann; unusual and difficult of achievement, like many of the long-lined poems. If we name half a dozen of his successful poems, we must refer to half a dozen different stanza forms, from the *Friends Beyond,* in his first volume, to the *Apostrophe to an Old Psalm-Tune* in the last.

If the art of the stanza is thus satisfactory, placing Mr. Hardy among the masters of verse-form, the design and execution of the poems as wholes are still more so. Mr.

in 1917, he writes:

> "When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
> And the May moth flaps its glad green leaves like wings,

Tennyson, wrote which they [illegible] work by which they are chiefly loved was not later work. In the main the later work was n reproductive, adding weight rather than value to earlier inventions. But in the case of Hardy it

Hardy is in this respect a very great lyric poet. None of his poems runs to any great length, and he wields a mastery over his thought or feeling as peremptory as his mastery of form. His art does not often permit his poems to flag or tail off at the end into something weak or jejune. The fact that he did not seek the most elaborate effects has its compensation here. His song is simple, if deep; his melody no more intricate than the single theme he draws it from. Thus his shorter poems are quite frequently little masterpieces in their kind, achieving a unity of effect which challenges comparison with the best in Herrick, and all but the very best in Burns. We find this alike in the love-lyrics, in some of the tragic tales, in little brooding poems of nature or of reflection. A poet has taken his art seriously who can achieve such a lyric as that beginning:—

> Rain on the windows, creaking doors,
> With blasts that besom the green,
> And I am here and you are there,
> And a hundred miles between!

He who has given us lyrics of this quality, if no more than a dozen or so, cannot be excluded from our poetical pantheon, on any mere pedant's decree. And Mr. Hardy has many—his own, too: unconventional sometimes in subject, fearless in his facing of those truths of life that his predecessors were so often wont to shun, but, in spite of their individuality, a step in the long and noble tradition of English poetry. No poet has shown a more complete mastery of that mood which is conscious of the "tears of things"; it may be a limitation that his genius can rarely express anything else really well; but let us not forget how much this is.

Like Wordsworth before him, Mr. Hardy has found poetry in the lives of the humblest of mankind, but what a different poetry! He has gone to the outcast, the fallen, the failure, and—wonderful to dream upon—has found in them the springs of his inspiration. His sympathy is broad and sensitive, but it has no parley with the mawkish or falsely sentimental; his stories in verse merely reflect his novels in this, and some of them—like *The Vampirine Fair*, *The Noble Lady's Tale*, and a few others—have the grim power of miniature versions of *Tess*, or *The Return of the Native*. Neither nature nor his art itself, as such, has inspired his verse: it is meaningless, or almost so, without the human foreground. Hence there are not many of his poems that are not in their essence, at least the raw material of stories.

(To be continued.)

OUR OCTOBER COMPETITION.

Judging from the number of entries sent in for our October Competition, it seems that ENGLISH readers prefer writing in verse to writing in prose; for quite a number of "Popeian" and "Swinburnian" versions of the three stanzas from Spenser's "Faerie Queene" have been submitted, but not a single Imaginary Conversation on the lines or Landor. Or perhaps we should say that it is evidence of the fact that it is a simpler matter to attain some degree of success in parodying poetic style than in doing the same thing with prose style—there is more to catch hold of, and less risk of wandering away from the true idea of parody, which, according to Dr. Johnson, is "A kind of writing, in which the words of an author or his thoughts are taken, and by a slight change adapted to some new purpose."

The First Prize of One Guinea is awarded to MR. ERNEST F. DUGGAN, of 51, Meads Street, Eastbourne, for the following "Extract from Spenser's 'Faerie Queene,' as it might have been written by Pope":—

Behold him rise by gentle zephyrs fann'd
Now o'er the raging sea, now o'er the land.
Now through the liquid main he plunges deep,
His search begun, his goal the House of Sleep.
Ah! how can I relate what peace remains
For those who reach the realms where Morpheus reigns
Here Tethys ever laves his liquid bed,
Here Cynthia bedews his drooping head.
Here murky night for ever holds her sway,
Nor heat of sun is known, nor light of day.
To these pacific realms he comes at last:
But how can he transgress the portal vast?
Two gates there are that guard what he has sought,
Of silver this, and that of ivory wrought.
By bolt and bar black CARE is kept away,
While dogs without keep vigil night and day.
Here Morpheus lies in subterranean grot,
The world forgetting, by the world forgot.
See how the king of sleep his couch surrounds
With murmurs soft and soporific sounds!
A trickling stream now soothes him; now the fall
Of gentle rain is heard throughout the hall.
And is not that enough? then add a breeze
That murmurs like innumerable bees.
Lo! while I write my eyes with sleep are dim:
What wonder then that it affected him?
Nor cry of man nor beast disturbs his rest,
For there is peace within those portals blest.
Ye gods have pity upon mortal man
Who sleeps in mighty cities—if he can!

The Second Prize goes to "Astrophel," the author of the following Swinburnian version, who will please forward his name and address:—

Scattering the swift sweet air, and winging straight
Through a wan world of waters wide as fate,
He sought Sleep's house, a dolorous place withdrawn
In earth's womb, and inviolable by dawn.
There, silvered with the moon's light dew, Sleep's head
Hangs flowerlike; there, for all time, round his bed—
With cleansing hands more tireless than the sea's—
The mother of all the Oceanides
Mourns. And above him lies, profound as sight,
The immeasurable mantle of the night.
Twofold the gates, and bolted fast: the one
Of ivory burnished like the noontide sun,
The other wrought with silver; and the twain
Held by great hounds whose eager eyes are fain
To hunt the foe that haunts a dreamer's mind,
Care. And the spirit, leaving these behind,
Came to Sleep's very self, and found him fraught
With heaviness of sloth, and heeding naught.

As if to plunge him deeplier in himself,
Lithe water slipping from a rocky shelf,
And on the roof a bland reiterate rain.
And tender mouth of wind, that was again
Like sound of bees that fare by field and fence,
Threw their sharp spell about his spirit of sense.
Else was all mute. The intolerable cries
Of street and mart there sounded in no wise,
But over all a quiet lay, sublime
As love or death or chance, and deep as time.

THE POETRY OF THOMAS HARDY.*

By JOHN FREEMAN.

THE publication in one volume of Thomas Hardy's Collected Poems affords a long-desired opportunity of surveying the whole of his work in verse, with the exception of "The Dynasts," within a single pair of covers. And it permits also a retrospect of more than fifty years, since "Wessex Poems," the first of five famous books, although not published until 1898, included many poems dated from the early sixties. Thus on the one hand Hardy's immense productiveness touches the fluent formalism of the Victorian period, and on the other the much-exploring, zestful activity of the latest Georgian poets. At one end he contrasts with Arnold and Tennyson, Browning and Swinburne, Patmore and the Rossettis, and at the other with Rupert Brooke, Edward Thomas and Mr. J. C. Squire. It is a vast and significant orbit, and of itself suffices to confer a distinction upon the present volume secondary only to the intrinsic importance of the poems which it contains. Amid the scores of eminent contemporaries, the blazing and the dying fires, he has remained solitary and uninfluenced. In 1867 he was writing:

Photo by E. O. Hoppé. **Mr. Thomas Hardy.**

NEUTRAL TONES.

"We stood by a pond that winter day,
And the sun was white, as though chidden of God,
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod;
They had fallen from an ash, and were gray.

"Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
Over tedious riddles solved years ago;
And some words played between us to and fro
On, which lost the more by our love.

"The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing
Alive enough to have strength to die;
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing . . .

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me
Your face, and the God-curst sun, and a tree,
And a pond edged with grayish leaves"—

and in the last poem in "Moments of Vision," published in 1917, he writes:

"When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay,
And the May moth flaps its glad green leaves like wings,
Delicate-filmed as new-spun silk, will the neighbours say,
'He was a man who used to notice such things'?

"If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
One may say, 'He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,
But he could do little for them, and now he is gone.'

"If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door,
Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
He was one who had an eye for such mysteries'?

"And will any say when my bell of quittance is heard in the gloom,
And a crossing breeze cuts a pause in its outrollings,
Till they rise again, as they were a new bell's boom,
He hears it not now, but used to notice such things'?"

In these hundreds of lyrics there is both variety and consistency. From first to last the form has developed towards an ever completer comprehensiveness, while the spirit has expressed itself more and more imaginatively and profoundly. If he has learned nothing from others, he has learned everything from himself. You are aware of a gigantic introspectiveness, almost without parallel in English poetry; but closer acquaintance reveals a curious impersonality even in this introspectiveness. He is at once personal and representative. Imagination has worked equally upon thought and sensation, so that these poems become things to be apprehended only with the complete faculties of mind and heart. They are poems for men. Indeed, they are remarkable in yet another aspect. Poetry is so often and so proverbially the gift and preoccupation of youth, that it is not surprising that the larger part of English poetry should be the work of young men. So often has the poet died young, even in the man who has lived long. But Thomas Hardy's work is all adult work, and much of it the work of an old man. Landor and Wordsworth, Browning and Tennyson, wrote when they were old men, but the work by which they are chiefly loved was not their later work. In the main the later work was merely reproductive, adding weight rather than value to their earlier inventions. But in the case of Hardy it is not the later work that would be sacrificed if surrender were inevitable. All his songs are, in Blake's phrase, Songs of Experience; and as experience has accumulated,

* * * * *

* "Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy." With a Portrait. 8s. 6d. net. (Macmillan.)

it has been transmuted by the reflective imagination. And always the artist has been diligent. The earliest of his poems had a new and rare music, often naïve, sometimes uncertain, but still individual and without echoes save of Shakespeare and, though far more infrequently and oddly, of the French writers of triolet and rondeau. Metrically Thomas Hardy's work is of almost equal delight to the simple lover of poetry and that singular contrary person, the prosodist with his innocent-cheating yard-wand. There are hundreds of new forms, scores of enchanting airs, and a few precious masterpieces of musical invention, as:

"And in the night as I lay weak,
As I lay weak,
The leaves a-falling on my cheek,
The red moon low declined—
The ghost of him I'd die to kiss
Rose up and said: 'Ah, tell me this,
Was the child mine, or was it his?
Speak, that I rest may find.'

"O doubt not but I told him then,
I told him then
That I had kept me from all men
Since we joined lips and swore.
Whereat he smiled, and thinned away
As the wind stirred to call up day . . .
——'Tis past! And here alone I stray
Haunting the Western Moor."

He loves rhyme, and uses even its difficulties to enrich his music, yet the simplicities of verse were never more exquisitely expressive than in such a poem as "Unrealised," and almost countless others.

But with all this said, little more has been touched than the formal outskirts of the new and strange land which is the poetry of Thomas Hardy. Of him we may ask, and indeed must ask if we would read him with other than idle mind, What do you mean, see, guess, know? What has the author of "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" and "Jude the Obscure" to express in verse, for the sake of which the prose of so many years was abandoned as a no more useful thing? The answer to such questions is bound to be indirect. We no longer call this poet a pessimist and ask why he is not an optimist. We recognise that with him, as with every original mind, what is called his philosophy is not the sum of the pure, impersonal contemplation of human and natural phenomena, but is far more accurately the expression of character. His attitude in confronting life is not rational but temperamental. It is character and not reason that gives the bias, and of this simple axiom Hardy's poetry offers abundant illustration. That he uses neutral tones, paints sad landscapes:

"They load the leafless hedge hard by,
And the blades of last year's grass,
While the fallow ploughlands turned up nigh
In raw rolls, clammy and clogging lie—
Too clogging for feet to pass"—

that his incidents are tragic, yet often related ironically, that wife deceives husband, that when the dead revisit mortal haunts they are bitterly grieved or sardonically pleased, that amends are made too late—all these do but represent the effect of human experience upon character. And, too, these things reveal the writer's philosophy at least as clearly as those poems which directly intend its revelation. Moreover, since honest artist would select certain aspects of life extend them as the whole of life, it is right to consi that the microcosm which Hardy offers us in this bo —the fruit, it must still be remembered, of more tha fifty years' brooding—is indeed a true and full exhibitio of inward and outward things as present to his mind That is to say, his entire sincerity must be immediately conceded, even by those to whom his world appears disagreeable. His philosophy (if the term may still pass) may be granted as truly his, and yet rejected as being true for him but not for oneself and one's different temperament. Even his wildest and grimmest fantasies must be accepted as temperamentally true. Take, for example, a mocking poem such as "Ah, are you digging on my grave."

"'Ah, are you digging on my grave
My beloved one?—planting rue?'
—'No: yesterday he went to wed
One of the brightest wealth has bred.
"It cannot hurt her now," he said,
That I should not be true.'"

It is not the happy widower; it is not the "nearest dearest kin," nor her late enemy, but "your little dog, who still lies near"; but when she praises the dog's fidelity, he alone of all things living still faithful to her memory, she is answered:

"Mistress, I dug upon your grave
To bury a bone, in case
I should be hungry near this spot
When passing on my daily trot.
I am sorry, but I quite forgot
It was your resting-place."

If wryness may seem to have dictated this, something perhaps sourer embitters the "Satires of Circumstance in Fifteen Glimpses." In these Hardy is attempting a skeleton poetry, without fleshly clothing or natural movement, and the starkness does not aid in credibility. One may even be driven to resentment. "The Statue of Liberty," for example, recites the questions of a sculptor who sees a man scrubbing the statue devoutly; praised for his pious work for Liberty, the cleaner answers that he does his humble task in memory of his daughter—"fairest and rarest"—who sat as model for the statue, and died in the town:

"In love of the fame of her,
And the good name of her,
I do this for her sake.

"Answer I gave not—of that form
The carver was I at his side;
His child, my model, held so saintly,
Grand in feature,
Gross in nature,
In the dens of vice had died."

The same untowardness in human affairs—the general theme of all his work, in verse or prose—is more effectively rendered when a sly humour leavens the helplessness; and sly humour is conspicuous among Hardy's gifts. Wanting this, his subjects are often of an intolerable rawness, and the ingenuity with which a new form, a difficult stanza, is fashioned for them does but make that rawness a little more sharply-edged, and the self-possession of the artist almost

amazing. Cynicism there is not, but an inverted humour, deepening rather than sweetening the sense of haplessness. It is the detached, even the remote spectator who speaks now and then; and indeed Hardy has a fondness for the vast aerial surveys which fell so easily into the great scheme of "The Dynasts":

"What were the infinite spectacles featuring foremost
Under my sight,
Hindering me to discern my paced advancement
Lengthening to miles;
What were the re-creations killing the daytime
As by the night?"

All these, it must be repeated, are to be accepted as true for their author, being written out of his temperament; and if we do not find them true for ourselves, if the world of our experience, inward and outward, is not strewn with statues of liberty and desolate with circumstantial satires, we may yet receive them for the increase of our sense of the originality, the variety and the sensitiveness of the mind of their author.

—The mind of their author. There is the ultimate fascination of these poems. Their lyrical qualities are great and in certain respects unique, but it is when these qualities are most freely felt in the expression of Hardy's own personality that they excite the deepest admiration. That is a value which they share with Shakespeare's sonnets and with Donne. Through these poems the mind of the author rises as stone whitens through green turf. The stone is shaped by centuries of change, by elemental influences. And the mind of Thomas Hardy, shown in these Collected Poems more sharply than in all the novels, rises solid out of English earth, shaped by the same elemental influences and ancestral forces, by ancient paganism and by the stealthy wave of modern science.

The Expository Times
March 1920.

NEW POETRY.

Thomas Hardy.

In his eightieth year Thomas Hardy sees the issue of his *Collected Poems* (8s. 6d.) in Messrs. Macmillan's handsome uniform edition of the poets—the edition we prefer to all others and in which we especially cherish Matthew Arnold, Christina Rossetti, and Tennyson. And many of the poems are due to his later years, many of the best, nearly all of the most melodious. For in his youth Hardy could not write poetry, but wrote bad prose in artificially correct lines, and nobody believed that he would ever write poetry. Thus it has been his lot to write the verse of an old man in his youth and the poetry of a young man in his old age. When he was seventy-three he wrote:

Out of the past there rises a week—
Who shall read the years O!
In that week there was heard a singing—
Who shall spell the years, the years!—

In that week there was heard a singing,
And the white owl wondered why.
In that week there was heard a singing,
And forth from the casement were candles flinging
Radiance that fell on the deodar and lit up the path thereby.

No one is able yet to see Hardy's poetry as a whole, and on the separate poems much variety of judgment is expressed. In substance it generally ends in an *ism*—pessimism. Is Hardy a pessimist, then? In his poetry? Assuredly, he finds at every step he takes that something is obstructing his way, and he concludes that the feet of all other men stumble over the same obstruction. The whole scheme of things is out of order—if it is a scheme at all. And easy acquiescence is not in *him*.

Has some Vast Imbecility,
Mighty to build and blend,
But impotent to tend,
Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardry?

Or come we of an Automaton
Unconscious of our pains?
Or are we live remains
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye now gone?

Or is it that some high Plan betides,
As yet not understood,
Of Evil stormed by Good,
We, the forlorn hope, over which Achievement strides?

But that is not sheer despair. It is a question, with an alternative for answer. 'Are we mere puppets dancing to a tune which the Automaton sets? Or are we the poor wraiths and ghosts of what was once Godlike, but which has now hopelessly deteriorated? Or—and here sounds the voice of Hope, the last thing left in Pandora's box—are we the champions of some mighty project and purpose, for which we must cheerfully give our lives if only those who come after us may win where we failed? Mr. Hardy gives us no answer to these questions. "Earth's old glooms and pains are still the same." But what we catch in these lines is the whisper of that divine discontent, which can never get satisfaction from a purely scientific view of the world, craving, as it perpetually does, for more light and a more comfortable assurance.'

[Registered as a Newspaper.] PRICE 3d.

"THE DYNASTS" AT OXFORD.

The Dynasts on the stage might, but probably will not, be a lesson to those who divide works of art into classes and then condemn any particular work they cannot classify. Mr. Hardy himself calls it an epic-drama, which by itself, in the eyes of classifying critics, is against him. Epic is one thing, drama another; and a combination of the two ought to be both spoiled; only in this case it is not. Really, a work of art does not need a class-name; if it is a work of art, it is itself. An intelligent foreigner, with the Continental habit of classifying artists and works of art, once said to the present writer: "But Hardy is a romantic"; to which the obvious reply was given: "No, he is Hardy." So *The Dynasts* is not an epic-drama; even on the stage it is *The Dynasts*, and there also, though the author did not mean it to be acted and calls it a play-shape for mental performance, it produces the effect intended by his genius. You may say, if you like, that he ought to have intended another effect, that aimed at by most plays and achieved completely by *Œdipus Tyrannus* or *Othello*; but to say that is merely to cut yourself off from the experience of *The Dynasts*; it does *The Dynasts* no harm.

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One might predict that such a theme so treated would be impossible on the stage, especially if only a few scenes from it were acted; but once again it has been proved not only possible but easier, especially for amateurs, than any play of skilfully contrived situations. For one thing, the difficulties of scenery are happily so great that no attempt can be made to overcome them. The scenery at Oxford, if it seldom had beauty, was right in principle, just enough to show what kind of place was intended and no more. So the drama could pass from scene to scene quickly, almost as quickly as the narrative of "War and Peace"; and speed is the essence of performance in this as in all chronicle plays. Indeed, this performance showed how Shakespeare himself ought to be performed, with speed, with quick change from scene to scene, and with acting kept as quiet as possible. It was not taken quite as fast as it might have been because some of the principal actors had unfortunately learned professional tricks; they tried to act, between their lines, instead of saying them and acting to them; they were restless in gesture and expression, not trusting to their words and the event to produce the needed effect. They had not resolved to give an amateur performance with its own peculiar merits, and so were most amateurish where they tried to be most professional. Mr. G. W. Sich, as Wellington, but for a little fidgeting, was an exception. He saw that Mr. Hardy meant his Wellington to be a contrast to Napoleon, an English, or as Mr. Shaw would say, an Irish contrast to Continental over-consciousness and contrivance; so he behaved at Salamanca like a master of foxhounds; it was startling and a little ridiculous but very near to Hardy and Creevey's Wellington, and perhaps to Wellington himself. Some of the rustics, too, were too rustic according to stage conventions, they drew out their parts with pottering and doddering. If all the words had been allowed to speak for themselves more of the drama might have been acted; but we say this only in hopes of another performance of *The Dynasts* and many performances of other great plays, all by amateurs behaving like amateurs, and perhaps in time establishing a new and right way of acting that might even have its effect upon the theatre.

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But the drama told most because of the time of its performance and the character of the performers and a great part of their audience. It would have seemed incredible six years ago that *The Dynasts* should be, so soon, played after a war greater than the one it commemorates and by and to undergraduates, many of whom had fought in that war. Yet its interest and success were not adventitious. To those who have lived through these years of history it was history repeating itself. Again and again there were strokes applauded for their likeness to reality, things said on the battlefield, in the crowd, which were recognized to be true, and by those who knew their truth only too well. The mind of the fighting man, and the mind of a people at war, are given with the justice and truth of the poet, not patriotically but universally. It is England itself because the author has not been a propagandist but an artist, seeking the universal truth in the particular and finding it. He has escaped dullness, that bugbear of the historic drama, because always, like Shakespeare, he has thrown into history the men and women he knew and, like Dumas himself, he can draw the great men of history with particularity and without parade, as if he knew them; as indeed he does, from memoirs and letters and scraps of reminiscence used with the divination of the poet and the justice of the novelist. His purpose, like that of Tolstoy in "War and Peace," is to set these great ones in their surroundings, not to gift them with impossible foresight and certainty of design, but to show how they express the genius of the peoples behind them and get their power from that expression. Yet he is juster than Tolstoy to Napoleon; for he has no grudge against the great, no resolve to prove them mere blind and self-deceiving figure-heads. To him they are great, although circumstance may have given them their resounding fame; they have been chosen for a reason and not at random. His philosophy, when he deals with actual men and women, is always better than in his choric personifications. Of them he says himself that "they are to be taken by the reader for what they are worth as contrivances of the fancy merely. Their doctrines are but tentative, and are advanced with little eye to a clear metaphysic." But since they utter doctrines, we cannot but ask ourselves whether these doctrines are true, whether indeed they are consistent with the whole content of human life as it is so truly and fully stated in the drama itself.

It is that very drama which makes one reader at least rebel against these doctrines. Mr. Hardy hopes that his Spirits and their utterances "may have dramatic plausibility enough to procure for them, in the words of Coleridge, 'that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment which constitutes poetic faith.'" But, with all respect to Coleridge, poetic faith is not so frivolous. The acceptance of machinery in the less essential parts of a drama, as in the opening of *King Lear*, is not poetic faith but a readiness to let the poet have his way and get to his business without cavil about trifles. So we accept conventions such as those of the Greek Chorus or Mr. Hardy's spirits readily enough; but we do not therefore accept what these spirits say. That is a matter of poetic faith indeed; and we can accept it only if it seems to us poetically, that is finally and universally, true. But the view of the universe expressed by these spirits often appears to be inconsistent with the existence of spirit, it makes not persons but processes supreme; and it empties the very process of history of all meaning and value. If a man really believed it, he could not produce a work of art at all. There is more logic, as there is more faith and poetry, in the spirits of *Prometheus Unbound* than in those of *The Dynasts*, and we look for Mr. Hardy's deeper, more unconscious, belief, not in these abstractions from nothingness, but in his men and women.

They are fools and blind often enough, but there is in them something greater than they know, as in the drama itself. The unconscious that Mr. Hardy is aware of, and we are aware of as we read him, is in them not in abstractions called Nature or The Universe; the "immanent will" is in them and in us, always becoming more conscious of itself; men have a larger share of it than anything not human known to us; and the more conscious it becomes, the more it is will. There is, at the opening of the drama, an inconsistency in the very language used about this will. The Spirit of the Years says—

> It works unconsciously, as heretofore,
> Eternal artistries in Circumstance,
> Whose patterns, wrought by rapt æsthetic rote,
> Seem in themselves its single listless aim,
> And not their consequence.

But artistries are themselves as human, as personal, as conscience; we cannot conceive of them without an artist, nor can rote ever be æsthetic. In fact æsthetic rote is a contradiction in terms; and perhaps Mr. Hardy means it to be and to express that sceptical despondency with which he looks at his inspiration when it is past. But his wisdom is in the inspiration, not in the despondency; in his death of Nelson which is real and really happened; not in the questions of the Spirit of the Pities, which are but questions asked and not answered according either to our hopes or to our fears.

The answer is not in the drama or in any words of man; but the drama, like all great works of art, makes us think greatly, not of ourselves, but of mankind, nor only of England but also of the enemies of England. No man could love England more than Mr. Hardy does, but he leaves her to speak for herself, or rather to be loved because she does not speak about herself. He gives us the corner of the earth he knows best with no provincial partisanship, gives it because he loves it, not because he hates other countries. To other men their love of that corner of the earth

Vanity Fair May 1920.

Also appeared in "The Patrician" June, 1920.

Thomas Hardy as Poet

A Discussion of the Great Novelist's Important Work in Verse

SIEGFRIED SASSOON

IN articles of this sort it is not difficult to persuade oneself that the public needs something bright, breezy, and intimate. Why worry—say the authors of such papers—about the higher criticism, when one can so glibly fill the gap (1800 words, I think, is the usual prescription), with genial gossip?

If the writer has chosen his subject adroitly, he will surely have spent a few hours in the company of his unsuspecting victim; and several hundred words can be tactlessly expended in an account of the great man's household effects, the view from his library window, with, possibly, a brief description of the climatic conditions under which the writer approached the august abode. The cat, the dog, the canary (if there *is* one), may also be worth a passing reference (the human touch!); and even the quality of the commissariat may be lightly indicated.

How easy it all is! And how impudent!

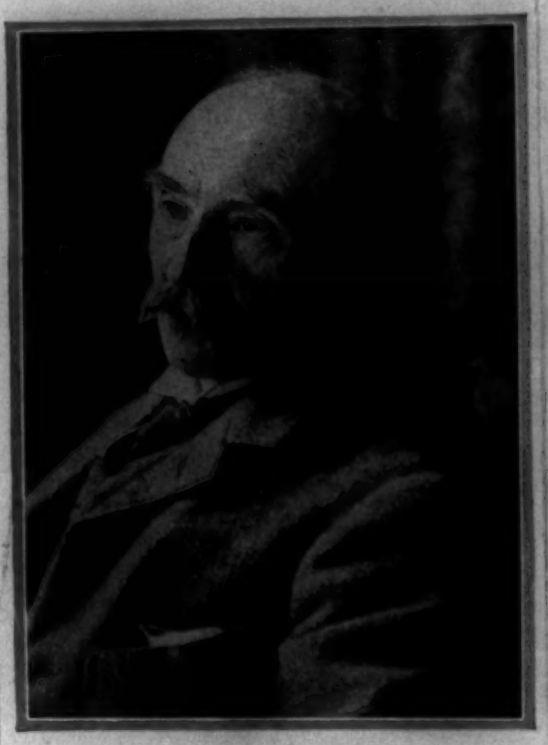
I have been privileged to know Mr. Thomas Hardy rather well, and have spent more than a few hours with him. Can it be my profound admiration for him, or an instinct for common decency which prohibits me from divulging the domestic economy of that dignified interior,—when I could so plausibly improvise a few profound remarks that were never actually uttered, or comment on the engaging antics of a non-existent spaniel?

In one of his curious meditations, Thomas Hardy describes himself as

"A thinker of crooked thoughts upon Life in the sere,
And on That which consigns men to night after showing the day to them."

Turning to the first pages of Hardy's *Collected Poems* (a stout green book which contains over five hundred ballads, lyrics and short poems written in every conceivable form) one discovers the eyes of this mighty genius gazing from a photograph taken a few years ago. It is a face at once sad and serene; there is no bitterness in it, and the eyes look out on the world with the same amusing and subtle discernment that is to be found in those characteristic poems where he examines the past and the present, refusing to accept the ever-shifting solutions which people adopt to drug their disquietude at certain unpleasant facts of human existence. In spite of his self-diagnosis, there is nothing crooked about Hardy's way of looking at things; he faces reality: questioning "Life with the sad-seared face," he wins only evasive answers or cryptic silences; and he has sufficient courage to admit it.

Thomas Hardy was born in 1840. His career as novelist is a matter of universal knowledge. His work as poet is not so widely understood. Twenty-five years ago he renounced novel-writing, and has since devoted himself to poetry (which had also been his sole concern up to his thirtieth year, while he was qualifying as an architect). His first book of poems appeared in 1898. Since then he has published other volumes, including *The Dynasts*, a gigantic epic-drama of the Napoleonic wars. *The Dynasts*, with its vast scope and almost super-human grasp of historic events, is generally believed to be Hardy's greatest achievement. But I am writing here of his short poems only, because from them the man



THOMAS HARDY

himself stands out as a complete and distinct figure.

Both in his philosophy and his style of writing he was already strangely mature when, in his twenty-sixth year, he wrote the sonnet called *Hap:*

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

This is an idea which haunts many of his lines; and, to him, life often seems a purposeless tissue of

"Fair growths, foul cankers, right enmeshed with wrong,
Strange orchestras of victim-shriek and song,
And curious blends of ache and ecstasy."

In another early poem, *Nature's Questioning*, "field, flock, and lonely tree" are made to ask . . .

Has some Vast Imbecility,
Mighty to build and blend,
But impotent to tend,
Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardy?

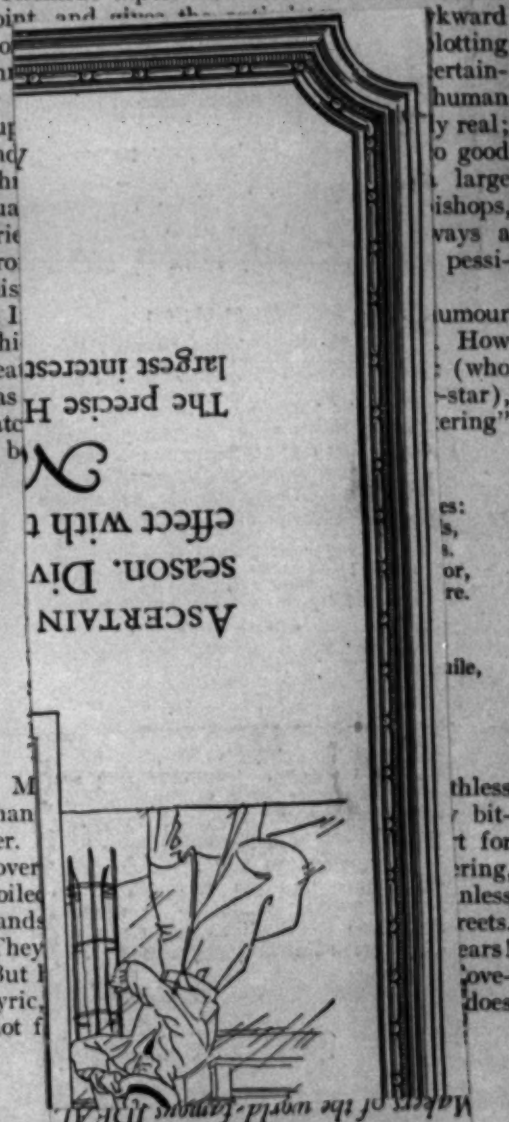
Or come we of an Automaton
Unconscious of our pains? . . .
Or are we live remains
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye now gone?

Or is it that some high Plan betides
As yet not understood,
Of Evil stormed by Good,
We the Forlorn Hope over which Achievement strides?

So he questions; but he does not despair. Like many of us, he is unconsoled by such

propositions as a Heaven newly-discovered by a scientific expert on æther. He sticks to the point and gives the [illegible] ...kward mo... ...lotting un... ...ertain-ly ... human pu... ...y real; and ... ...o good Ch... ... large qua... ...ishops, pri... ...ways a pro... ... pessi-mis...

I ... ...umour whi... ... How nea... ... (who has ... ...-star), catc... ...ering" a b...



M... ...thless than ... bit-ter. ... ...t for lover... ...ring, foile... ...nless lands... ...reets. They... ...ears! But ... ...ove-lyric, ...does not f...

In ... ...od, he so... ...ful note. ... ...his power... ...pi-gramm...

"THE DYNASTS" AT OXFORD.

The Dynasts on the stage might, but probably will not, be a lesson to those who divide works of art into classes and then condemn any particular work they cannot classify. Mr. Hardy himself calls it an epic-drama, which by itself, in the eyes of classifying critics, is against him. Epic is one thing, drama another; and a combination of the two ought to be both spoiled; only in this case it is not. Really, a work of art does not need a class-name; if it is a work of art, it is itself. An intelligent foreigner, with the Continental habit of classifying artists and works of art, once said to the present writer: "But Hardy is a romantic"; to which the obvious reply was given: "No, he is Hardy." So *The Dynasts* is not an epic-drama; even on the stage it is *The Dynasts*, and there also, though the author did not mean it to be acted and calls it a play-shape for mental performance, it produces the effect intended by his genius. You may say, if you like, that he ought to have intended another effect, that aimed at by most plays and achieved completely by *Œdipus Tyrannus* or *Othello*; but to say that is merely to cut yourself off from the experience of *The Dynasts*; it does *The Dynasts* no harm.

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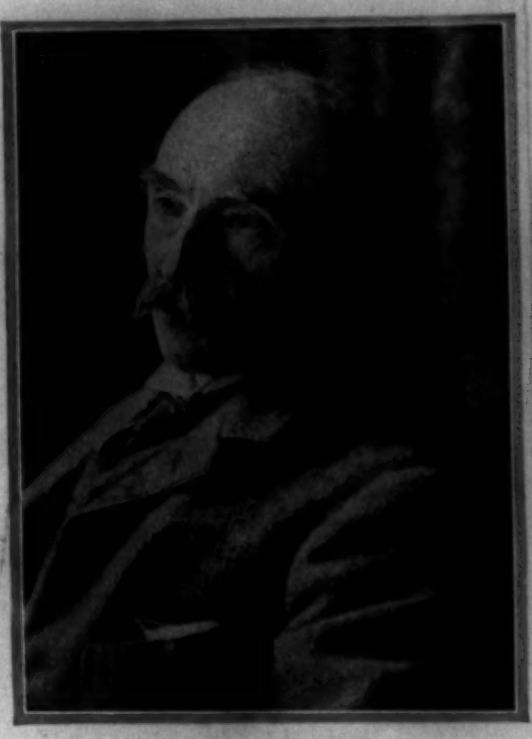

THOMAS HARDY

Both in his philosophy and his style of writing he was already strangely mature when, in his twenty-sixth year, he wrote the sonnet called *Hap:*

If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: "Thou suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy,
That thy love's loss is my hate's profiting!"

Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;
Half-eased in that a Powerfuller than I
Had willed and meted me the tears I shed.

But not so. How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown?
—Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan . . .
These purblind Doomsters had as readily strown
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain.

This is an idea which haunts many of his lines; and, to him, life often seems a purposeless tissue of

"Fair growths, foul cankers, right enmeshed with wrong,
Strange orchestras of victim-shriek and song,
And curious blends of ache and ecstasy."

In another early poem, *Nature's Questioning*, "field, flock, and lonely tree" are made to ask . . .

Has some Vast Imbecility,
Mighty to build and blend,
But impotent to tend,
Framed us in jest, and left us now to hazardy?

Or come we of an Automaton
Unconscious of our pains? . . .
Or are we live remains
Of Godhead dying downwards, brain and eye now gone?

Or is it that some high Plan betides
As yet not understood,
Of Evil stormed by Good,
We the Forlorn Hope over which Achievement strides?

So he questions; but he does not despair. Like many of us, he is unconsoled by such propositions as a Heaven newly-discovered by a scientific expert on æther. He sticks to the point, and gives the optimists some awkward moments. Hardy has been taxed with plotting unnecessarily tragic situations, and he certainly deals ungently with many of his human puppets: but the puppets are convincingly real; and life is not always generous, even to good Christians. He has knocked quite a large quantity of fluff out of the dovecotes of bishops, priests, and deacons, but there is always a profound pity underlying his apparent pessimism.

In his satirical verses there is a grim humour which even his victims should appreciate. How neatly he pillories the fashionable cleric (who has missed his true vocation as a movie-star), catching the reverend gentleman "registering" a benediction in the vestry:

"And now to God the Father," he ends,
And his voice thrills up to the topmost tiles:
Each listener chokes as he bows and bends,
And emotion pervades the crowded aisles.
Then the preacher glides to the vestry-door,
And shuts it, and thinks he is seen no more.

The door swings softly ajar meanwhile,
And a pupil of his in the Bible class,
Who adores him as one without gloss or guile,
Sees her idol stand with a satisfied smile
And re-enact at the vestry-glass
Each pulpit gesture in deft dumb-show
That had moved the congregation so.

Many of his satires are far more ruthless than this, but they are always justifiably bitter. He has a warm corner in his heart for lovers, but he usually sends them wandering, foiled and disillusioned, across the sunless landscapes and down dreary winter streets. They often get left out in the rain, poor dears! But he has written at least one matchless love-lyric, where the magic fills his heart and does not fade:

When I set out for Lyonesse,
A hundred miles away,
The rime was on the spray,
And starlight lit my lonesomeness
When I set out for Lyonesse
A hundred miles away.

What would bechance at Lyonesse
While I should sojourn there
No prophet durst declare,
Nor did the wisest wizard guess
What would bechance at Lyonesse
While I should sojourn there.

When I came back from Lyonesse
With magic in my eyes,
All marked with mute surmise
My radiance rare and fathomless,
When I came back from Lyonesse
With magic in my eyes.

In *The Division*, a poem of his later period, he sounds his more familiar and regretful note. I quote it as a further example of his power to make his words sing, and for its epigrammatic and vivid shapeliness:

Rain on the windows, creaking doors,
With blasts that besom the green,
And I am here, and you are there,
And a hundred miles between!

O were it but the weather, Dear,
O were it but the miles
That summed up all our severance,
There might be room for smiles.

But that thwart thing betwixt us twain,
Which nothing cleaves or clears,
Is more than distance, Dear, or rain,
And longer than the years!

(*Continued on page 106*)

As I stated earlier in this article, I am quoting from Hardy's poems in such a way as to present a picture of him in his most characteristic moods. And I also wish to make it clear (to readers unacquainted with his verse) that his finest poems flow as easily as a hillside stream. When he is rugged and ungainly, it is because of the intensity of his thought-concentrations, and not (as many critics have with pseudo-critical acumen suggested), through an inability to write harmonious lines. His mind constantly recurs to his love for wild creatures, especially birds, which he observes with microscopic accuracy. Leaning on a gate in the desolate twilight of a late-December day, he hears, and tells, how

An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carolling
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,

That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

While in *The Blinded Bird*, one of his most poignant poems, commencing with little sympathy, "pitched in pitiless mood," he

by most plays and achieved completely by *Oedipus Tyrannus* or *Othello*; but to say that is merely to cut yourself off from the experience of *The Dynasts*; it does *The Dynasts* no harm.

Many closet dramas, it is true, have an obvious vice, even when great poets have written them; they are all poetical talk and the plot is only a pretext for it. But *The Dynasts*, at least where human beings speak, is free from this vice. The talk is all to the point, its effect is cumulative, and we read it or listen to it as if it were the talk of real actors in these great events. That is the reason why *The Dynasts* succeeds on the stage in a manner that has probably surprised Mr. Hardy himself. It proves that what is needed for dramatic success is, above all things, an interesting theme and action and talk which, in whatever form, illustrate and develop it. Compared with these essentials all the ingenuity of plot and situation spinners is mere trifling, demanded only by a lazy audience that will do nothing for itself and must have everything done for it by the playwright and the actors and the scenery. Mr. Hardy may be helped by history and our knowledge of it, such as it is; but if it were not for his own sense of history, the very greatness of his theme would undo him. We should laugh at wooden puppets pretending to be Nelson and Napoleon and Wellington; in *The Dynasts* we listen eagerly because the words seem to be those of the men themselves. Mr. Hardy has by right of genius annexed the historic interest to his art; and he has been able to do this just because he is faithful to history as he has read it; he is inspired by it as elsewhere by life itself and he has informed it with his own knowledge of life. He has given us history more real and more true than that of the historians because he has alternated the great with the little. He tells us that "the slight regard paid to English influence and action throughout the struggle by those Continental writers who had dealt imagina-

and perhaps to Wellington himself. The rustics of the rustics, too, were too rustic to stage conventions, they drew parts with pottering and dodder the words had been allowed to spe selves more of the drama might have acted; but we say this only in hopes of another performance of *The Dynasts* and many performances of other great plays, all by amateurs behaving like amateurs, and perhaps in time establishing a new and right way of acting that might even have its effect upon the theatre.

Where this performance excelled was in crowd scenes, like the Guildhall scene after Trafalgar, and still more the dreadful scene of deserters from the retreat to Corunna. That was magnificently done, with all the players not drilled into their parts but drawn into them, inspiring each other to a climax. We have never seen anything so well done by professionals, though the same scene was good enough in London. But we doubt whether it could ever be worth while to give any of the poetry of the spirits, partly because most of this poetry is not equal in merit to the rest of the work, partly because the saying of poetry is a lost art with us, and our many different methods are only so many proofs of that fact. The ladies who said the spirit poetry at Oxford were much better at it than most professional actresses; they observed the rhythm and did not over-emphasize every other word; but it must be confessed that they added little, perhaps because the lines they had to say add little to the drama. The poem about Albuera, for instance, is equal to Hohenlinden, but it is hardly worth saying, out of its place, in the drama, of which we might have had more if there had been no spirit poetry. On the other hand, the directions, or descriptions, were very well read by Mr. R. L. A. Harris, and justified the author's use of them, even in a performance.

But the drama told most because of the time of its performance and the character of the performers and a great part of their

machinery ... ts of a drama, as in the opening or ..., is not poetic faith but a readiness to let the poet have his way and get to his business without cavil about trifles. So we accept conventions such as those of the Greek Chorus or Mr. Hardy's spirits readily enough; but we do not therefore accept what these spirits say. That is a matter of poetic faith indeed; and we can accept it only if it seems to us poetically, that is finally and universally, true. But the view of the universe expressed by these spirits often appears to be inconsistent with the existence of spirit, it makes not persons but processes supreme; and it empties the very process of history of all meaning and value. If a man really believed it, he could not produce a work of art at all. There is more logic, as there is more faith and poetry, in the spirits of *Prometheus Unbound* than in those of *The Dynasts*, and we look for Mr. Hardy's deeper, more unconscious, belief, not in these abstractions from nothingness, but in his men and women.

They are fools and blind often enough, but there is in them something greater than they know, as in the drama itself. The unconscious that Mr. Hardy is aware of, and we are aware of as we read him, is in them not in abstractions called Nature or The Universe; the "immanent will" is in them and in us, always becoming more conscious of itself; men have a larger share of it than anything not human known to us; and the more conscious it becomes, the more it is will. There is, at the opening of the drama, an inconsistency in the very language used about this will. The Spirit of the Years says—

> It works unconsciously, as heretofore,
> Eternal artistries in Circumstance,
> Whose patterns, wrought by rapt æsthetic rote,
> Seem in themselves its single listless aim,

which Japan became incorporated in it she was enrolled in advance among the Allies of the Great War, the defenders of liberty, law, and civilization.

M. Gérard claims that the foundation of the Quadruple Entente will, from its ulterior results, furnish the year 1907 with a glorious title to the gratitude of the world. It was then that the lines of defence were prepared which were destined, in 1914, to assure against German aggression the safety and liberty of Europe and of the whole civilized world. It is an interesting section in M.

The Rev. S. Baring-Gould, whose account of "The Church Revival" appeared in 1914, has written a similar study of "The Evangelical Revival," which Messrs. Methuen will publish during the spring. One chapter is devoted to the psychology of conversion.

Diplomatic Service have not contributed as they should have to our knowledge of any country throughout the whole world, and their opportunities have been no less than those of their French colleagues.

---

bloody losses the attack began to come to an end.

The position of the B.E.F. at Mons, on Sunday, August 23, 1914, has been often described, and there is a map showing the general line in Lieutenant-Colonel Brereton's "The Great War and the R.A.M.C." Starting on the left at Condé, it ran along the canal bent northwards, and there was a nasty salient; it then turned south-east for about 11 miles. The left was held by the 19th Infantry Brigade, with the 84th French Territorial Division in Condé (it fought

effects, the view from his library window, with, possibly, a brief description of the climatic conditions under which the writer approached the august abode. The cat, the dog, the canary (if there *is* one), may also be worth a passing reference (the human touch!); and even the quality of the commissariat may be lightly indicated.

How easy it all is! And how impudent!

I have been privileged to know Mr. Thomas Hardy rather well, and have spent more than a few hours with him. Can it be my profound admiration for him, or an instinct for common decency which prohibits me from divulging the domestic economy of that dignified interior,—when I could so plausibly improvise a few profound remarks that were never actually uttered, or comment on the engaging antics of a non-existent spaniel?

In one of his curious meditations, Thomas Hardy describes himself as

"A thinker of crooked thoughts upon Life in the sere,
And on That which consigns men to night after showing the day to them."

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So little cause for carolling
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,

That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

While in *The Blinded Bird*, one of his most poignant poems, remembering some little songster "enjailed in pitiless wire", he "wonders how so zestfully thou canst sing", and cries,

Who hath charity? This bird.
Who suffereth long and is kind,
Is not provoked, though blind
And alive ensepulchred?
Who hopeth, endureth all things?
Who thinketh no evil, but sings?
Who is divine? This bird.

As a poet of war Hardy speaks with a planetary greatness. Not only in *The Dynasts*, but in many a grim ballad and narrative poem, he constantly reminds us of the destructive futility of international conflicts, and "Empery's insatiate lust of power".

In some whimsical little verses called *The Man He Killed*, a simple soldier vaguely wonders what it all means,—this battle-business. "If I'd met him in an inn" he thinks, "I'd probably have found him quite a decent chap:

But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him, as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

* * * * *

Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown.

I will conclude by quoting Hardy's answer to the problem; and before anyone starts to explaining that Hardy has made a mistake, let him first prove that he knows as much about human life as the man who wrote . . .

Often when warring for he wist not what,
An enemy-soldier, passing by one weak,
Has tendered water, wiped the burning cheek,
And cooled the lips so black and clammed and hot.

Then gone his way, and maybe quite forgot
The deed of grace amid the roar and reek;
Yet larger vision than the tongue can speak
He there has reached, although he has known it not.

For natural mindsight, triumphing in the act
Over the throes of artificial rage,
Has thereto moulded victory's peal of pride,
Reaped to rihands policy's specious page
That deals but with evasion, code, and pact,
And war's apology wholly stultified.

74

"Athenaeum" 19.11.20.

"Baltimore Evening Sun" 19.2.21.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

THE past week has brought with it one great event, the publication of Mr. Thomas Hardy's poem, "And there was a Great Calm," in the supplement of *The Times* on Armistice Day, November 11. It is a wonderful, unforgettable poem, with strange beauties and strange solemnities as of a voice coming from a height, yet not remote. Or rather its remoteness is that of the secret soul of every man who has thought long and honestly about the war. Mr. Hardy can speak for all that is noble in England as no poet since Wordsworth has been able. The voice of resignation and pity in his poem should sound like a trumpet to the soul of the nation.

* * * *

Nothing can be more truly inspiring to a people than the knowledge that a great man dares to face the truth on its behalf. How pitiful it was, therefore, to find *The Times* endeavouring to set genius right!

The Sinister Spirit sneered: "It had to be";
And again the Spirit of Pity whispered: "Why?"

The Times knew why. But perhaps that is because the Spirit of Pity is not in *The Times*. But even if it did know why, it should not have spoken then. Still less should it have permitted or employed some poetaster to write a jargonic reply to Mr. Hardy on the following day. Can we not even at this eleventh hour see that a great man has a right to our reverence? Even if we do not agree with him, can we not understand that his voice will move men to depths that argument leaves untroubled? Can we not understand that it is good, wholly good, that a nation should be moved to its depths, and that the men who can move these depths are greater than kings and ministers?

The appearance of this poem by Mr. Hardy comes to emphasize the grievous nature of the blunder made by the Swedish Academy in refusing him one of the Nobel Prizes for Literature. It is now officially announced that the prize for 1920 has been awarded to Knut Hamsun, as was anticipated, and that for 1919 to Carl Spitteler, a meritorious but entirely second-rate Swiss poet. The latter award is so ridiculous that it cannot fail to give a blow to the prestige of the Swedish Academy. It is at least some satisfaction to ourselves that three of the chief Swedish newspapers protest that the award was not made to England. "It will be a bitter disappointment," says the Stockholm *Tidning*, "that a 75-year-old Swiss poet of no international importance has been preferred to the grand old man of English literature, Thomas Hardy." The disappointment is, indeed, not very great. Mr. Hardy would have given distinction to the Nobel Prize, not the Nobel Prize to Mr. Hardy. So long as neither Mr. Hardy nor M. Anatole France has received it, the Nobel Prize and those who award it will remain merely parochial.

A Collected Edition Of All Of Hardy's Poems

INCLUDING "THE DYNASTS"

Bring Realization Of Enduring Values Of Great Literature—Cover Sixty Years.

In this world of turmoil and change, this world wearily inclined to exalt half-gods to Olympian pedestals, it is a stirring and a salutary experience to spend a day or so with Thomas Hardy's poems, and thus to be brought abruptly back to a realization of the enduring values of great literature.

The novels of Thomas Hardy are an accident. He wrote them because of poverty. They have made him the supreme living literary figure of the world. But they were all written—probably with effort—between his thirtieth and his fifty-fifth year. The natural expression of the great grim soul of Thomas Hardy is in poetry. He began life as a poet. He is ending it as a poet. And the poetry he has always written is poetry incredibly, startlingly, in keeping with the mood of the world today.

The "Collected Poems" of Thomas Hardy can now be had in two large volumes, one of which contains—complete—"The Dynasts"—that great epic-drama of the Napoleonic wars which slowly moves into its predestined place as one of the greatest glories of English literature.

The other volume contains 500 and more ballads, lyrics and short poems ranging in date from 1865 to 1916. This volume is a gold mine of thought, of beauty, of irony and of pity. The man or woman who will procure it and read it will have one of the greatest intellectual experiences that any book is likely to give them.

For the poems in this book (it is not yet published in this country, but can be easily procured) are as unlike any average American conception of "poetry" as can well be imagined. They are as far from such poetry as Longfellow or Whittier or Lowell wrote as the negative pole of a compass is from the positive pole. They have no sweetness, no light. They utter no platitudes, offer no optimism, bring no hope.

They do something more enduring—what the great literature of all time has done. They voice man caught in the ironic intricacies of existence, in the apparently purposeless maze of—

> Fair growths, foul cankers, right enmeshed with wrong,
> Strange orchestras of victim-shriek and song,
> And curious blend of ache and ecstasy.

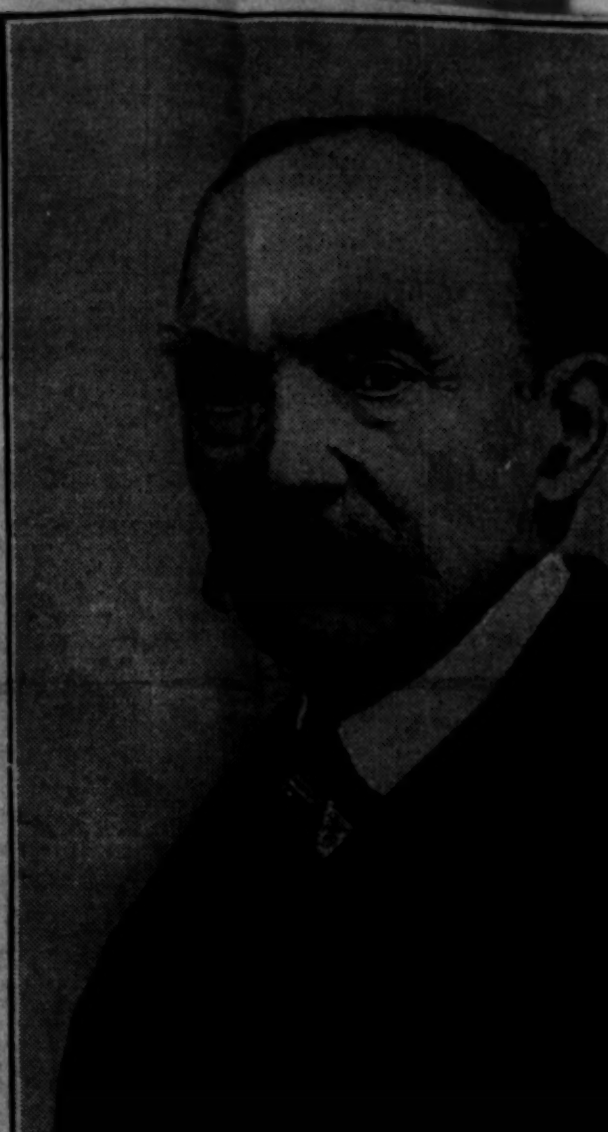
Satire, irony—and a vast, all-embracing compassion for every living thing caught in the toils of life; far-sweeping thought ranging so far that Napoleon's armies are seen as but crawling ants, and compassion burning so steadily that every problem of every ant looms as real a thing as the sun—that is what you will find in Hardy.

The vanity of every hope, of every dream, of every ideal; a sense of the physical beauty of the world so keen that it bursts into singing, lyrical lines; a comprehension of the infinite intricacy and complexity, joy and pain, of human love—all of this voiced in a style which is noble and beautiful because it expresses a great mind and a great soul—these, too, you will find in Hardy.

There is not a line of adolescent, emotional *weltschmerz* in all the 521 pages of this book. There is no line of easy optimism. Such things form no part of the great enduring world literary tradition which Hardy carries on. Such things have no place in the true world literature which is the deepest, most vital activity of man. But there are lines of such virile beauty and tenderness and intensity of feeling as no soul saturated with easy optimism could ever hope to write—poignant lines that express the basic nobility of man confronted with life as it actually is—as it actually is, tonight, in China, or Vienna—or in hearts and minds in turmoil in Baltimore mansions and Baltimore slums.

26 Hardy has "field, flock and lonely ask:

(see next column)



THOMAS HARDY

It was at the unveiling of Rodin's bust of William Ernest Henley in the crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral more than 13 years ago that H. G. Wells, of the brilliant assemblage, inquired "who that gray little man was." That "gray little man" was Thomas Hardy, the English novelist. The three words exactly describe Mr. Hardy, for he is a small, spare man, with scanty gray hair and mustache, and with inconspicuous personality. From a recent interview with the great novelist, one learns that Mr. Hardy's writing room is upstairs in his picturesque house in rural England. To reach it one must pass under a small archway at the end of the landing. Behind the arch is a cleverly concealed passage and steep staircase, closed by a sliding door. This exit affords, if necessary, a way of [illegible] likely to be invi[illegible] When Mr. Hardy gins writing imm[illegible] remains indoors working alone, n[illegible] solitary room but be the most desir[illegible] ary performance. lived all his life shire—the countr[illegible] scenes for most cated as an arch[illegible] fession in Londo[illegible] age he wrote his edies," and since exclusively to l[illegible] Mr. Hardy mar[illegible] woman of no m[illegible]

American readers, too, even more than English or European readers, will be struck by the surprise of these poems. The next line, the *denouement*, is never what you expect.

One thing more—a supreme test. There are 18 poems of "War and Patriotism," written by Hardy at 75. They are stern, intense. But they do not rant. They will stand the test of postwar reading. No hymns of hate, but recognition of the guilt of those—

> At root and bottom of this who flung this flame
> Between kinfolk, kin-tongued even as are we.

Great souls do not rant even in time of world war.

A stirring, an inspiring, an ennobling work—these poems written by Hardy during nearly 60 years. They lift the mind to serener heights. They show us what great literature can be. They are a great heritage to the entire English-speaking world.

JESSE LEE BENNETT.

"Morning Post" 23.2.21.

"Plain English"
26. 2. 21.

THE DAY.

REVUE GERMANIQUE
23, Rue Brûle-Maison, 23
LILLE
Année 1920
N° 4
Page 401

nique. 1920.

NNUELLE : LA POÉSIE ANGLAISE

longue pièce qui évoque les pérégrinations des
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matérielle ou à travers les océans de la pensée,
le désir de leur âme » :

a faith unfaltering, they tread
that seems to reach beyond the dead,
with God yet closer, their sure guide,
o ne'er their steps forsook,
o, though out of sight
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oy a yearning to behold His face,
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i au plus haut point de son art, art très délibéré
tualisé même, mais au travers duquel circule
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patrem amissum, et qui enveloppent ces spécula-
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tout premiers sonnets, *Hap*, écrit dès 1866 :

arrives it joy lies slain,
blooms the best hope ever sown ?
Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
Time for gladness casts a moan.

de la vie » fait l'unité même de l'œuvre de
est absurde et méchant. La vie est un chaos

way of escape when his sanctum is
to be invaded from the front stairs.
Mr. Hardy has a story in mind he be-
riting immediately after breakfast and
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g alone, maintaining that not only a
y room but an impregnable house would
most desirable place for complete liter-
formance. Mr. Hary is over 80 and has
ll his life in a little village in Dorset-
the countryside that has furnished the
for most of his novels. He was edu-
as an architect and practiced that pro-
in London until he was 30. At that
wrote his first book, "Desperate Rem-
" and since then has devoted his time
sively to literature. Seven years ago
Hardy married his secretary, herself a
n of no mean literary ability.

Co, 1920, 321 pp., 8/6 net.

in the future, so they declare, will be limited to the range covered in the past.

A generation ago they were saying that the gates of faëry land had swung back for ever. But since that day, in more ways than one, the imaginative mind has opened new shafts into reality, new lands have been surveyed; some discoveries in the wonder of the world—in its romantic story and its well-kept secrets—have been registered. Mr. Thomas Hardy was scarcely known as a poet a generation ago, but in *The Dynasts* he has broken new ground, with none of his intellectual energy abated; in his epic drama he has revealed the human scene caught in one great moment, with man then, as for ever, under the control of a Destiny which he may seek to understand but in vain. The light which burns upon human destiny, from this poet's imagination, is a fiercely independent thing.

(Edward Shillito)

The "Morning Post's" Idea of Great Poetry.

The poor old *Morning Post*, in its issue of last Wednesday, [illegible] up its voice and gave vent, to change the metaphor, [illegible] appended egg of "literary criticism," *apropos* of [illegible] John Keats Memorial Volume," a collection of prose [illegible] verse issued by the Keats House Committee in cele- [illegible] on of the centenary of the death of Keats.

So many votive offerings are here rendered up at the shrine of Keats's hundredth heavenly birthday, that it is embarrassing to have to choose a few examples. Mr. Thomas Hardy's "At a House in Hampstead" must, of course, take precedence if only because the author is the greatest of living English poets who has attained the vivid exactness (sometimes) and the sad earnestness (always) to which Keats aspired in the shadow of advancing death. Mr. Hardy imagines the poet revisiting his old abode and ancient tree, and wonders if he would be troubled at the changes wrought in Rome being wrought yet more on the misty hill one time his home :

Or will you, softening, the while
You further and yet further look
Learn that a laggard few would fain
Preserve your nook ! . . .

Where the Piazza steps incline,
And catch late light at eventide,
I once stood, in that Rome, and thought,
"'Twas here he died."

I drew to a violet-sprinkled spot,
Where day and night a pyramid keeps
Uplifted its white hand, and said,
"'Tis there he sleeps."

Pleasanter now it is to hold,
That here where sang he, more of him
Remains than where he, tuneless, cold,
Passed to the dim.

Many other poets, English and American, pay their tribute here—but more than any other Mr. Hardy's has the ringing weight of gold, the far odour of frankincense, the bitter perfume of myrrh.

Mr. Hardy has about as much claim to be called "the eatest of living English poets" as he has to be called the scoverer of the "binomial theorem." The plain truth is at Mr. Hardy is not even a moderately good versifier. He a fair second-rate novelist who until he launched out to the dubious and unsavoury in "Jude the Obscure," as rather unfairly neglected by the critics. From the oment he wrote "Jude the Obscure," however, his rtune was made and he has lived in a chorus of silly and norant adulation ever since. When he had completely ritten himself out as a purveyor of dubious fiction, Mr. ardy betook himself in his dotage to the writing of poetry." The lines quoted by the *Morning Post* are a ir sample of his quality. They are clumsy, obscure, ugly, alting, and devoid either of emotion or even passable chnical correctness. The first two lines of the third anza quoted do not scan, and throughout the feeble omposition the rhymes which any real poet would have pplied, for verse of this kind, in the first and third lines, are lacking. The whole performance is considerably below the level of the kind of verse that Sir Owen Seaman churns out week by week for *Punch*. That such pitiable doggerel should be quoted by the *Morning Post* as an example of the work of "the greatest of living English poets" shows that to the kind of critic who commends himself to the *Morning Post*, words have ceased to have any meaning. It would really be difficult to find even in "modern poetry" a worse example of verse than the last stanza quoted by the *Morning Post*.

Pleasanter now it is to hold
That here, when sang he, more of him
Remains than where he, tuneless, cold,
Passed to the dim.

How does one set about "passing to the dim," Mr. Hardy ? The words make no sense, and are not even good grammar. We ourselves were asked, nay pressed, to write "a little something" for the "John Keats Memorial Volume." We declined the flattering invitation on the ground that we did not choose to have our name associated with certain of the other "Singing birds" (and signatories to the Ross Testimonial) who were advertised as contributors to the same anthology. But if we were so inclined we would undertake to write better stuff than Mr. Hardy's on the subject of Keats "eight years together, dinners and suppers and sleeping hours excepted."

"Baltimore Evening Sun"
19. 2. 28.

NTS

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A Call...	55			
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ank Note	50	50	50	
et Sugar	48	48	48	
s Mag	54	56	54½	56
an	29¼	29¼	29⅝	29⅝
r & Fdy	12	123	123	123
Coal	35⅝	35⅝	35½	35⅝
& L pfd	44⅛	44½	43⅝	44
pfd	59½	61	60	61
alt		20¼	20¾	20¾
adiator		71	71	71
ip	10¼	9⅜	9¼	9⅜
m & R f	42¼	41⅞	41¾	41¾
Fdy	30⅜	30¾	30¼	30¼
g Ref	93½	94¼	94¼	94¼
g Ref pf	101	102	101¼	101¼
matra	85	87¼	84¾	86⅜
el & Tel	100	100½	100⅜	100½
Olympia bacco	121¼	120¼	120	120
ob B	118¼	118	118	118
Woolen	95½	66	60¾	61¾
rit Pa pf		35	35	35
nda	39½	39½	35⅝	35⅝
lf & W I	55¼	55	49¾	50¼
lf W I pfd	39½	40	37⅝	40
Loco	90¼	90¼	89½	90
Steel B	57¼	57¼	57	57¼
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T	12¾	13⅝	13⅝	13⅝
& Sup	13½	13½	13¼	13¾
Oil		15⅝	15⅝	15⅝
trol	40¼	40¼	40	40¼
rac	116⅞	116⅞	116½	116⅝
eather	37½	36⅝	35½	36
eather pf	85	84	81	81¼
de Pasco	28¾	28½	28½	28½
Motors	71	71¼	70¼	71
Ohio	59	59½	59½	59½
St P	27¾	27½	27¾	27¼
St P pf	43¼	43	42½	42½
P cts	27	27¼	27	27
Copper	12	12	11¾	11¾
Copper	22¾	22½	22½	22½
Cola	22	21½	21	21
raph Mfg	9⅛	9½	9¼	9½
andy Co	1¾	1¾	1¾	1¾
igar Corp	52¼	53⅛	53	53⅛
nt Cal M	5¾	6	6	6
Textile	20¼	20¼	19⅝	19⅝
Prod	70¾	70¾	70¼	70¼
ble Steel	94	94½	93	94½
Cane Sug	24¼	24	24	24
r & R G	1⅞	1⅞	1¾	1¾
r pfd	3¾	4¼	3¾	4
s Mines	14¼	14¼	14¼	14¼
Johnson	59¾	60¾	60	60
d pfd	13¾	13¾	13¾	13⅝
Play-Lasky	63½	63	62½	62½
I & S pfd	26⅛	27	26¼	26⅛
Body		85	83	83
Tires	14¾	14¼	14¼	14¼
n W & W	2¾	2½	2¾	2¾
al Asphalt	67	67	65¼	66¼
Cigar	61¾	62½	62	62¾
lec	131	131	131	131
Motor	14½	14¾	14	14
Motor pfd	71¾	71¾	71¼	71¾
ich B F	38½	37¾	37¾	37¾
M & N pf		25½	25½	25½
on Oil		70	70	70
Motor	13½	13½	13¼	13½
anlic Steel		15	15	15
Oil	4¾	4¾	4½	4½
Con Corp	35½	35¾	35	35¾
Mer Mar	14¾	14⅝	14¼	14¼
Mer Mar pf	53¾	53	52½	52½
Nickel	15½	15¾	15½	15¾
Paper	56¾	57	56	57
ible Oil	21	21½	20¾	20¾
Tea	10	11¼	10¼	10¾

	53½	53	53
Lehigh Val'ey	53½	54	53
Loew's Inc	18½	18	18
Lorillard	145	146	146
Mackay Co pfd	57	57	57
Mexican Pet	160½	159½	159
Middle Sta Oil	13½	13½	13
Midvale Steel	30¾	30⅝	30
Mo Pac pfd	38¾	38½	38
Mont Ward	17⅝	18¼	17
Mullins Body	27	27	27
Nat Acme Co	23	22½	22
Nat Con & Cab	3⅛	3	
Nat R M 2d pf	5½	5¼	
Nev Con Cop	11⅝	11¼	11
N O T & M R R	74¾	75	7
N Y Air Brake	85½	86	8
N Y C & H R	72	72	7
N Y N H & H	19¾	20	1
Norfo k & West	103¾	104¾	10
Nor Pac	84	84	
Ont Silver Mines		4¾	
Pac Oil W L	32	32½	3
Pan Am P & T	77½	76¼	
Pa A T & B	70	68	
Penn R R	40¾	40⅛	
Penn Seaboard	11⅞	12	
Phillips Pet Co		26	
Pierce Arrow	26¾	26⅜	
Pierce Oil Co	10⅝	10½	
Pitts Coal		60¾	
Pitts & W Va	29¾	29¼	
Pullman Co		106	1
Punta Aleg Su	49¼	49	
Pure Oil Co	34	34⅝	
Rand Mines		24	
Ray Con Co	13⅝	13⅞	
Reading	76½	76⅝	
Read Co 1st pf	46½	46½	
Reading 2d pfd	46¾	47	
Rem Type Co	35	34½	
Rep Iron & St	67⅝	67⅝	
Rep Mo T Co	22½	22	
Royal Dut N Y	62	61¾	
St Louis S F	21¼	21	
Saxon Motor		5¼	
Sears Roebuck	87½	86½	
Shell Trans & T		40	
Sinclair Oil	24	24¼	
So Port Rica Su	76	75¾	
Sou Pac	78½	78¾	
Sou Pac rights	16¾	17⅜	
Sou Ry	22	21¾	
S O N J pfd	109	109	
Studebaker	60¾	60½	
Sub Boat Corp	8½	8¾	
Superior Oil Corp.	8⅞	9	
Tex Oil Co	43½	43⅝	
Tex & Pac	22¾	22½	
Tex & Pac C & O	27⅝	27½	
Tobacco Prod	54½	54½	
Trans Oil	9	9	
Union Oil	21⅞	21¾	
Union Pac	120¼	120⅝	
United Drug		98½	
United Fruit	106¼	106⅝	
United Retail S	56½	56½	
U S Cast I P	13		
U S Ind Alcohol	69¾	70	
U S Rubber	70	69½	
U S Stee	83¾	83⅝	
Utah Copper	55¼	54⅞	
Vanadium Corp	37	37	
Va-Ca Chem	35¼	35	
Vlaudou Inc		6	
Wabash	7¾	7	
Weber & Heilb		12	
West Md	10¾	10⅝	
West Md 2 pfd		17	
West Pac pfd		69	
White Oil Corp	14½	14	
White Motor	40¼	40	

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ant looms as real a thing as the sun—that is what you will find in Hardy.

The vanity of every hope, of every dream, of every ideal; a sense of the physical beauty of the world so keen that it bursts into singing, lyrical lines; a comprehension of the infinite intricacy and complexity, joy and pain, of human love—all of this voiced in a style which is noble and beautiful because it expresses a great mind and a great soul—these, too, you will find in Hardy.

There is not a line of adolescent, emotional *weltschmerz* in all the 521 pages of this book. There is no line of easy optimism. Such things form no part of the great enduring world literary tradition which Hardy carries on. Such things have no place in the true world literature which is the deepest, most vital activity of man. But there are lines of such virile beauty and tenderness and intensity of feeling as no soul saturated with easy optimism could ever hope to write—poignant lines that express the basic nobility of man confronted with life as it actually is—as it actually is, tonight, in China, or Vienna or in hearts and minds in turmoil in Baltimore mansions and Baltimore slums.

26 Hardy has "field, flock and lonely ask:

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> At root and bottom of this who flung this flame
> Between kinfolk, kin-tongued even as are we.

Great souls do not rant even in time of world war.

A stirring, an inspiring, an ennobling work—these poems written by Hardy during nearly 60 years. They lift the mind to serener heights. They show us what great literature can be. They are a great heritage to the entire English-speaking world.

JESSE LEE BENNETT.

(see next column)

"Morning Post" 23.2.20.

BOOK OF THE DAY.

REVUE GERMANIQUE
28, Rue Brûle-Maison, 28
LILLE
Année 1920
N° 4
Page 401

Revue Germanique. 1920.

intitulée *Pilgrims*, une longue pièce qui évoque les pérégrinations des pauvres humains épris de rêve, d'infini, d'absolu, qui errent le long des plaines arides de la vie matérielle ou à travers les océans de la pensée, en quête de la vérité, « le désir de leur âme » :

Or with a faith unfaltering, they tread
A road that seems to reach beyond the dead,
Walking with God yet closer, their sure guide,
Who ne'er their steps forsook,
And who, though out of sight
Ne'er quits their side.
Moved by a yearning to behold His face,
Though death be in the look,
They force the portals of the Infinite ...

M. Brereton atteint ici au plus haut point de son art, art très délibéré sans doute, très intellectualisé même, mais au travers duquel circule un souffle puissant. Ses rythmes vigoureux, si virils dans leur étreinte de l'idée, abondent en accents personnels, dans le poème si poignant, par exemple, dédié *Ad fratrem amissum*, et qui enveloppent ces spéculations métaphysiques d'une foi robuste en même temps que d'une tendresse largement humaine et toute sincère.

Le pessimisme domine uniquement chez M. **Thomas Hardy**, dans son roman d'abord, et encore plus dans son œuvre poétique, où, comme Meredith, il a enfermé l'essence même de sa pensée. Il pénètre jusqu'au moindre recoin de ce volume de 521 pages d'impression serrée intitulé *Collected Poems* (1) où le grand écrivain a réuni l'œuvre de plus de cinquante-cinq années de production, le premier morceau, *Amabel* portant la date de 1865, et les derniers de 1917, les *Dynastes*, d'autre part, parus en 1912, formant un volume indépendant presque aussi considérable que celui-ci. La note tragique résonne uniformément au cours de ces longues années où la pensée de Hardy s'est élargie sans doute, est devenue plus ample et plus complexe, mais a évolué dans une direction unique que marque un des tout premiers sonnets, *Hap*, écrit dès 1866 :

... How arrives it joy lies slain,
And why unblooms the best hope ever sown ?
— Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And dicing Time for gladness casts a moan.

Cette sombre « critique de la vie » fait l'unité même de l'œuvre de Hardy. Le Destin, selon lui, est absurde et méchant. La vie est un chaos

(1) Macmillan and Co, 1920, 521 pp., 8/6 net.

in the future, so they declare, will be limited to the range covered in the past.

A generation ago they were saying that the gates of faëry land had swung back for ever. But since that day, in more ways than one, the imaginative mind has opened new shafts into reality, new lands have been surveyed; some discoveries in the wonder of the world—in its romantic story and its well-kept secrets—have been registered. Mr. Thomas Hardy was scarcely known as a poet a generation ago, but in *The Dynasts* he has broken new ground, with none of his intellectual energy abated; in his epic drama he has revealed the human scene caught in one great moment, with man then, as for ever, under the control of a Destiny which he may seek to understand but in vain. The light which burns upon human destiny, from this poet's imagination, is a fiercely independent thing.

(Edward Shillito)

de souffrances dont nous ne sommes pas responsables, et qu'a laissé naître, au hasard, la sottise d'une fatalité aveugle, pareille à

A knitter drowsed
Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness.

Elle offre un spectacle cruel auquel la Divinité, si elle était pitoyable, devrait mettre fin aussitôt, au lieu de passer son éternité dans la rêverie indolente, ou l'impuissant remords. La nature, d'autre part, sous son dehors de beauté, ne témoigne, à l'endroit de l'homme, qu'une indifférence hostile. Elle ne nous offre aucun réconfort. Elle représente, elle aussi, une vaste énergie inconsciente, un ensemble de phénomènes mécaniques régis par des lois absolues. Comme la vie humaine, elle est aux mains du destin qui se sert d'elle comme d'un instrument uniquement matériel (*The Subalterns*. *The Sleep-Worker*).

Si désolant qu'il soit, ce nihilisme, cependant, ne présente aucun caractère morbide. Les ironies cruelles de la vie, le poète les considère non du point de vue de sa sensibilité, mais sous un angle purement rationaliste, et il nous en fournit, non une interprétation émotive, mais une solution tout intellectuelle :

I speak as one who plumbs
Life's dim profound,
One who at length can sound
Clear views and certain.
But after love what comes ?
A scene that lours,
A few sad vacant hours,
And then the Curtain.

écrit-il délibérément. Le spectacle de l'humanité souffrante est froid, glacial même, de toutes les tristesses injustes qui s'y accumulent, déclare Hardy, mais sans que le poète se réfugie pour cela ni dans la révolte égoïste, à la manière des romantiques, ni, à celle des décadents, dans le cynisme détaché. Il a beau avoir franchi les frontières du Doute, et pénétré dans le pays du Non-Espoir : la réalité, dont il sait qu'il n'y a plus rien à attendre, n'est point aussi terrible qu'on l'imagine, à distance et la sincérité brutale vaut mieux que la molle illusion des faux-semblants

... Would men look at true things,
And unilluded view things,
And count to bear undue things,

The real might mend the seeming,
Facts better their foredeeming,
And Life its disesteeming.

Ajoutez à la nudité de cette réponse intellectuelle, d'un si austère positivisme, la pitié, une pitié hautaine, sans doute, qui hait les plaintes

et les larmes, mais où l'homme exprime tout son cœur loyal. Dédaigneux de sa propre douleur, Hardy compatit à celle d'autrui, à celle des petites gens du Wessex surtout qu'il connaît si intimement et qui, enfermés dans le réseau de fer des circonstances, sont la proie de leurs désirs, de leur folie même quelquefois, mais plus souvent encore, comme la pauvre Tess, de leur honnêteté sans détour. Puisque nous sommes les jouets d'une force inconnue,

The unweeting dream, work of some vast Imbecillity,

et qu'il nous faut renoncer à nous tourner vers le ciel, dans l'espérance seulement d'un monde réparateur, la seule attitude qu'il nous reste à adopter est celle d'une sincérité courageuse et totale envers nous-mêmes. Acceptons notre sort d'un cœur vaillant, et tendons, au moins, à adoucir le mal qui nous environne de toutes parts. Et qui sait, se demande Hardy, si ceux qui nous suivront ne verront point, dans le champ même que nous aurons tenacement labouré, germer la semence de jours meilleurs ?

De sorte que c'est un spectacle bien confortant que nous fournit cet écrivain dont on célébrait, il y a quelques mois, le quatre-vingtième anniversaire, et qui, dans sa vigueur entière encore, nous apporte une des œuvres les plus solides de la poésie d'aujourd'hui ; de cet homme qui, dernier survivant des grands Victoriens, a réussi, à force de compréhension intelligente, à se maintenir à l'avant de la production contemporaine, et continue à donner l'exemple, lui le vétéran, de l'amour de la vérité la plus audacieuse, de l'énergie solitaire, indomptable, pour qui le compromis n'est que lâcheté, de la pitié altière pour cette grande douleur humaine, enfin, dont il a fait, non une matière à écrire, mais une dignité et un orgueil.

Floris DELATTRE.

Baltimore Evening Sun
19. 2. 20.

COMPTES RENDUS CRITIQUES.

BAYFIELD, M. A. : **A Study of Shakespeare's Versification.** Cambridge University Press. 1920. X-521 p., 16 sh.

L'auteur de ce gros livre avoue la hardiesse de sa tentative ; il s'agit de rien moins en effet que d'une interprétation nouvelle, aboutissant à une scansion et à une lecture nouvelles, de milliers de vers de Shakespeare. La perspective est alléchante. Et l'ouvrage a fait quelque bruit en Angleterre.

En fait, les idées de cette thèse me semblent se réduire à deux (1), de nouveauté et de valeur fort inégales.

La première, celle à laquelle l'auteur revient avec insistance, porte en somme sur l'orthographe des textes shakespeariens et sa valeur prosodique. M. B. observe que des Quartos au Folio, le nombre s'accroît sensiblement des mots ou groupes de mots que l'imprimeur contracte parfois à coup d'apostrophes, en une seule syllabe : *tans* pour *taketh*, *nere* ou *nev'r* pour *never*, *ist* pour *is it*, *in th'* ou même *i'th'* pour *in the*, etc. Fort justement, M. B. estime qu'il ne faut pas prendre ces raccourcis pour des fac-similé de la prononciation réelle des acteurs du temps, ou plutôt pour l'expression d'une tendance toute scolaire à ramener la souplesse du vers de Shakespeare à la régularité du décasyllabe type. Certes, quiconque sait combien peu, soit avant, soit après la Renaissance, un strict syllabisme a régné en versification anglaise, ne fera aucune difficulté pour admettre que dans la plupart de ces cas on a affaire à la « résolution », comme dit M. B., ou à la multiplication des syllabes faibles en position non accentuée. Et sans doute, si l'allemand König dans son recensement, toujours cité (*Der Vers in Shakesperes Dramen*, 1888), a vraiment cru qu'on prononçait *th'nose*, *th' throat*, *I'm'gen*, *duch'ss*, etc. quanti (p. 5), il devait avoir d'inquiétantes notions sur les acrobaties dont le consonantisme anglais est capable..

Mais il y a longtemps que l'on pense différemment. M. B. qui semble ignorer les travaux les plus connus de ses prédécesseurs (2) trouve

(1) Une bonne moitié du livre (ch. 3 à 5, pp. 30 à 234 ; puis les appendices, pp. 313 à ...) est consacrée à des citations ; près d'un quart (pp. 475 à la fin) offre simplement un texte extenso d'*Antoine et Cléopâtre*, coupé comme M. Bayfield l'entend.

(2) Dans le petit manuel dont il est question plus bas, *The Measures of the Poets*, M. Bayfield raconte ingénieusement comment, *après* avoir écrit son livre, il a eu connaissance des travaux de Sidney Lanier !

Great souls do not rant even in time of world war.

A stirring, an inspiring, an ennobling work—these poems written by Hardy during nearly 60 years. They lift the mind to serener heights. They show us what great literature can be. They are a great heritage to the entire English-speaking world.

JESSE LEE BENNETT.

Morning Post. 23.2.21.

BOOK OF THE DAY.

The Immortal Memory.

THE JOHN KEATS MEMORIAL VOLUME. Issued by the Keats House Committee, Hampstead. Illustrated. John Lane. 25s. net.

So many votive offerings are here rendered up at the shrine of Keats's hundredth heavenly birthday, that it is embarrassing to have to choose a few examples. Mr. Thomas Hardy's "At a House in Hampstead" must, of course, take precedence if only because the author is the greatest of living English poets who has attained the vivid exactness (sometimes) and the sad earnestness (always) to which Keats aspired in the shadow of advancing death. Mr. Hardy imagines the poet revisiting his old abode and ancient tree, and wonders if he would be troubled at the changes wrought in Rome being wrought yet more on the misty hill one time his home:

Or will you, softening, the while
You further and yet further look
Learn that a laggard few would fain
Preserve your nook? . . .

—Where the Piazza steps incline,
And catch late light at eventide,
I once stood, in that Rome, and thought,
"'Twas here he died."

I drew to a violet-sprinkled spot,
Where day and night a pyramid keeps
Uplifted its white hand, and said,
"'Tis there he sleeps."

Pleasanter now it is to hold
That here, where sang he, more of him
Remains than where he, tuneless, cold,
Passed to the dim.

Many other poets, English and American, pay their tribute here—but more than any other Mr. Hardy's has the ringing weight of gold, the far odour of frankincense, the bitter perfume of myrrh.

Contemporary Rev. March 1921

UNEXPLORED FIELDS OF POETRY.

THE modern writer is tempted to pity himself because he comes so late into the harvest and there are only gleanings left. The critics of an age in which science has outraced imagination may exclaim: "Unexplored fields of poetry! There are none. Let us be content to receive with reverence, and to transmit with piety the treasures committed to our care; but we must not hope, in passing, to slip into the store anything of our own. The thing that hath been it is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun."

Such is the word of middle-age in every generation. It never was true; the presumption is that it is untrue still. Few would draw the boundary so far back as the Preacher, but there are many who believe that the morning stars ceased to sing when Keats or Wordsworth or Tennyson died. "The book is closed now," they say, "man has always been saying that it is closed; hitherto they have been wrong; now *we* say it, and behold it is true!" Poetry in the future, so they declare, will be limited to the range covered in the past.

A generation ago they were saying that the gates of faëry land had swung back for ever. But since that day, in more ways than one, the imaginative mind has opened new shafts into reality, new lands have been surveyed; some discoveries in the wonder of the world—in its romantic story and its well-kept secrets—have been registered. Mr. Thomas Hardy was scarcely known as a poet a generation ago, but in *The Dynasts* he has broken new ground, with none of his intellectual energy abated; in his epic drama he has revealed the human scene caught in one great moment, with man then, as for ever, under the control of a Destiny which he may seek to understand but in vain. The light which burns upon human destiny, from this poet's imagination, is a fiercely independent thing.

(Edward Shillito)

LATE LYRICS AND EARLIER.

"The Times" [illegible].5.22

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MR. HARDY'S POEMS.

(Published To-day.)

LATE LYRICS AND EARLIER. By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan and Co. Pp. xxiv. 288. 7s. 6d. net.

In his preface, or what he calls an apology and is in fact a justification, Mr. Hardy says that the pessimism alleged against him "is in truth only obstinate questionings in the exploration of reality, and is the first step towards the soul's betterment, and the body's also." Many will be grateful for this clarifying, but they will be more grateful for the poems that follow; for, though they are full of warnings against confidence in summer schemes, though they proclaim life's frustrations ("The things we wished would stay were going," and vice versa, and

> Things sinister with things sublime
> Alike dissolving),

though he still chafes at the out-of-jointness of the time—any time and all its successors,—though he is often as convinced as Job of man's birthright to trouble, yet there is no trace here of that dark belief—

> As flies to wanton boys, so we to the gods—
> They kill us for their sport.

Mr. Hardy feels the pain of the world with plant-like sensitiveness, but he feels its beauty with a sensitiveness no less, and it is that equation that defeats pessimism:

> There had been years of Passion—scorching, cold,
> And much Despair, and Anger heaving high,
> Care whitely watching, Sorrows manifold,
> Among the young, among the weak and old . . .
> The Sinister Spirit sneered: "It had to be!"
> And again the Spirit of Pity whispered, "Why?"

His pity is intense, as all his emotions are, and it is when he stands awhile aloof with his strong searching intellect set over against his emotions that those bleak sinister judgments break in. And it is all because of his almost fierce sincerity. At all costs he will get through to reality; hence the irony of this:

> If I have seen one thing
> It is the passing preciousness of dreams;
> That aspects are within us; and who seems
> Most kingly is the King.

It is not Mr. Hardy's faith that life is an illusion, but he is very fond of showing up the illusions of life. This book is full of them: folk looking hard at phantoms and thinking them realities, and scanning realities which they take to be phantoms:

> No more. And the years drew on and on
> Till no sun came, dank fogs the house enfolding;
> And she saw inside, when the form in the flesh had gone,
> As a vision what she had missed when the real beholding.

Illusion and disillusion seem so to haunt Mr. Hardy that neither he in his lyrics nor the persons in his other poems ever so much as suggest abandonment either to sorrow or joy. This, of course, weakens the lyrical force of his poems, if it doesn't actually thin their quality. He can be tender, exquisitely tender, as in mourning the death of a pet cat, but then comes the intellectual pull obliquely restraining, and the tenderness passes off into philosophical regret. And so in this very characteristic piece, "The Sun's Last Look on the Country Girl":

> The sun threw down a radiant spot
> On the face in the winding sheet—
> The face it had lit when a babe's in its cot;
> And the sun knew not and the face knew not
> That soon they would no more meet.
>
> Now that the grave has shut its door,
> And lets not in one ray,
> Do they wonder that they meet no more—
> That face and its beaming visitor
> That met so many a day?

Characteristic, too, are the narrative poems, tragedies most of them, often with that macabre touch of his, sometimes with that starkness that hurts, and sometimes with that subtle atmosphere that chillingly holds. His gift for landscape has been less exercised than usual, but there is one poem, "A Woman Driving," which has more than an echo of "The Phantom Horsewoman":

> With form erect and keen contour
> She passed against the sea,
> And, dipping into the chine's obscure,
> Was seen no more by me. . . .
>
> Some said her silent wheels would roll
> Ruthless on softest loam,
> And even that her steed's footfall
> Sank not upon the foam.
>
> Where drives she now? It may be where
> No mortal horses are,
> But in a chariot of the air
> Towards some radiant star.

That is the old Hardy with his universality and his imaginative breadth, which, balancing Hardy the temperamental, give him in poetry a place apart. C. P.

"Manchester Guardian" 23.5.22.

also published in "The Manchester Guardian Weekly Edition" 26.5.22.

(also Times Weekly Edition 1?.6.22)

MR. HARDY'S NEW VOLUME.

LATE AND EARLY LYRICS.

A DUALITY OF SELVES.

LATE LYRICS AND EARLIER WITH MANY OTHER VERSES. By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan. 7s. 6d.)

One of the poems in this book begins:—

> In a heavy time I dogged myself
> Along a louring way,
> Till my leading self to my following self
> Said: "Why do you hang on me
> So harassingly?"

The leading self is one who feels and dreams; the following self is a matter-of-fact fellow who dislikes illusion and distrusts feeling. In word and movement, and subject and sense, this poem, "He follows himself," is right Hardy, and, up to a point, it is shrewd self-criticism. There are always the two Hardys: one acutely sensitive to joy and pain, both his own and others', and one ever shrinking back from feeling into cold thought, because joy is brief and chancy, and pain is sure. There always have been the two selves; for in "A Young Man's Exhortation," a poem of 1857 now first printed, we see them at loggerheads, with the leading self bearing it off in the end.

> If I have seen one thing
> It is the passing preciousness of dreams;
> That aspects are within us; and who seems
> Most kingly is the King.

Both selves are poets, and so readily and wholly poets that the tiniest incident, or even a day with no incident in it, can open in one or other of them the reserves of being and the passion for singing. When the two work together, then comes Thomas Hardy's finest poetry. One secret of the greatness of "The Dynasts" is that in it the leading self could tell his huge passionate story in harmony with the following self's logic, and the following self found his logic lit to splendour by the passion of the leading self. Often the duality gives us that sort of amœbæan poem well known to students of Hardy. Here is the first verse of a new one:—

> When friendly summer calls again,
> Calls again
> Her little fifers to these hills,
> We'll go—we two—to that arched fane
> Of leafage where they prime their bills
> Before they start to flood the plain
> With quavers, minims, shakes, and trills.
> "—We'll go," I sing; but who shall say
> What may not chance before that day!

And sometimes the following self has things nearly all his own way.

But the outstanding and delightful impression which a first study of this new volume leaves is the power of the leading self. The first poem in the book contrasts good weather with bad. And, if the poet shuns the wet and the cold, he thoroughly enjoys the experience of shunning it and the power in his craft which can turn the experience to beauty. A stronger instance is easy to find. In "Penance," a pale, thin man sits playing on an old harpsichord, to which he would not listen when a dead woman had played it:—

> I do to-day
> What I would not then; and the chill old keys,
> Like a skull's brown teeth
> Loose in their sheath,
> Freeze my touch; yes, freeze.

For all its grimness, that is not the work of the following self, the denier: it is the work of the leading self, the affirmer, with his sensitiveness, his biting imagination, his intensity of experience and of utterance. Every now and then in this new book there comes a touch of that crabbedness which shows that this poet works not through sound to sense but through sense to sound, and does not always push right through to his end. Making for beauty first of all by exact adaptation of words to thought and feeling, he is more, perhaps, than most poets at the mercy of his own leads of vitality; for should his feeling or his vision flag, he cannot cover up the droop with decoration. And to watch him working in this way is to see how very great are his vitality, his apprehension, his intensity; how much of positive delight in experience there is in him, for all his regrets, his fond loyalties to the past, his tenderness towards all sufferers, trees, birds, men, women. From this new book we learn once more that he can sing as purely as a boy ("First or Last" is one of the sweetest little songs that he has ever made), and tell strange and tragical tales; can achieve, by his own method of precision, sudden suggestions of immeasurable greatness, or flashes of description so vivid that they all but make one jump, and can weave his own music, like no one else's, now involved and recurrent, and now as clear and sweet as a quick stream, using words that no one else has dared to use in poetry, and rhythms that no one else has lit upon—all by means of the force of his apprehension and imagination and the power in him that must turn to poetry whatever he thinks or feels.

There is an "Apology" prefixed to these poems. The following self wrote a good deal of it; and only the following self would have bothered to reply to the nonsense whereby people have tried to make Hardy out the versifier of a borrowed pessimism. But the following self gets in a neat little bit or two.

Times May 23/22

The New Hardy.

"About half the verses that follow were "written quite lately," says MR. THOMAS HARDY in an "Apology" prefixed to his "Late Lyrics and Earlier," which are reviewed to-day on our Literary Page. And he adds that the unusually far back poems to be found here are but some that were overlooked in gathering previous collections. This is the real profusion of great poetic genius. He would say with a smile that when asked for a poem it was his habit to "go to "a drawer and take something out," and there is without doubt much wonderful poetry still left, even "overlooked," in safe hiding-places. But HARDY has given more than half his working life and all his old age, if such it can be called, to poetry, and with this new book in our hands we could almost find it in our hearts to regret that he had not given the whole. A few days more and he will be eighty-two, this old man eloquent, this singer who has kept the heart of a boy through the overlaid wisdom and ironic humour of the passing years. It is more than a quarter of a century since he deliberately abandoned the art of the novelist and returned to his master passion. Recognition as our greatest living poet has come to him slowly but surely, especially since his great epic-drama, *The Dynasts*, illuminated the first decade of the new century. It has long been clear that HARDY has made a new poetry, new in its music, in its speech, and in matter all his own, and this new book can but strengthen the reverence which his fellow-countrymen feel for great genius greatly used. It will also, we think, arouse much discussion, partly for its curious assertion of a duality of selves, which reminds us of a similar but half-jesting confession recently made by another man of genius, SIR JAMES BARRIE. But there is no jest in HARDY'S poems; the leading self is one who feels and dreams, while the following self is a matter-of-fact fellow who dislikes illusion and distrusts feeling. There has always been these two Hardys; but it is good to find that the leading self is still strong and hearty.

"The Daily News" 23.5.22.

'NEW DARK AGE

MR. HARDY'S REPLY T[O] HIS CRITICS.

ALLIANCE OF RELIGION AND REASON.

Mr. Thomas Hardy comes out bol[dly] against his critics in the "Apolog[y]" which he prefaces to his new book [of] poems, "Late Lyrics and Earli[er]" (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.), which is publis[hed] to-day.

He protested vehemently against [the] charge of pessimism that has been [so] often brought against him, but, when [he] begins to write about the "precari[ous] prospects of English verse at the pres[ent] day," he threatens us with the coming [of] a new Dark Age:

> Whether owing to the barbarising [of] taste in the younger minds by the da[rk] madness of the late war, the unabashe[d] cultivation of selfishness in all classe[s,] the plethoric growth of knowledge simu[l]taneously with the stunting of wisdom, "a degrading thirst after outrageou[s] stimulation" (to quote Wordswort[h] again), or from any other cause, w[e] seem threatened with a new Dark Age.

He tells us that he once thought that it was the bad critics who were largely to blame for the evil days on which poetry has fallen:

> I formerly thought, like so many roughly handled writers, that so far as literature was concerned a partial cause might be impotent or mischievous criticism; the satirising of individuality, the lack of whole-seeing in contemporary estimates of poetry and kindred work, the knowingness affected by junior reviewers. . . .

POETRY AND RELIGION.

Mr. Hardy has now come to the conclusion, however, that poetry is in danger from the same causes as religion:

> In any event poetry, pure literature in general, religion—I include religion because poetry and religion touch each other, or rather modulate into each other; are, indeed, often but different names for the same thing—these, I say, the visible signs of mental and emotional life, must like all other things keep moving, becoming; even though at present, when belief in witches of Endor is displacing the Darwinian theory and "the truth that shall make you free," men's minds appear, as above noted, to be moving backwards rather than on.

Mr. Hardy, who was once described by Mr. Chesterton as "the village atheist—brooding on the village idiot," now apparently believes that nothing can save us but a religious revival:

> Since the historic and once august hierarchy of Rome some generation ago lost its chance of being the religion of the future by . . . . throwing over the little band of neo-Catholics who were making a struggle for continuity by applying the principle of evolution to their own faith, joining hands with modern science, and outflanking the hesitating English instinct towards liturgical reform (a flank march which I at the time quite expected to witness, with the gathering of many millions of waiting agnostics into its fold); since then, one may ask, what other purely English establishment than the Church, of sufficient dignity and footing, and with such strength of old association such architectural spell, is left in this country to keep the shreds of morality together?

NOTE OF OPTIMISM.

He adds in optimistic mood:

> It may be a forlorn hope, a mere dream, that of an alliance between religion, which must be retained unless the world is to perish, and complete rationality, which must come, unless also the world is to perish, by means of the interfusing effect of poetry—"the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; the impassioned expression of science," as it was defined by an English poet who was quite orthodox in his ideas. But if it be true, as Comte argued, that advance is never in a straight line, but in a looped orbit, we may, in the aforesaid ominous moving backward, be doing it *pour mieux sauter*, drawing back for a spring.

A review on the verse in his new book will appear in Saturday's issue.

"Pall Mall and Globe" 23.5.22.

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

THE BALANCE OF ILLUSION AND REALITY.

"Late Lyrics and Earlier." By Thomas Hardy. (London: Macmillan and Co.) 7s. 6d. net.

There is no poet whose essential impulse has undergone less change than Mr. Hardy's, or to whose work it would be more difficult to give a chronology from internal evidence. The contents of this volume range in date over a period of more than forty years, but of variation in mood or message, or changing aspect in those riddles which the poet looks so squarely in the face it would be a bold critic who would try to define the traces.

The eternal conflict between human desire and the irresponsive stroke of fate is Mr. Hardy's theme to-day as it was in the fifties, and with the same equipoise he dispenses pity for the one and honest recognition for the other.

> The Sinister Spirit sneered: "It had to be!"
> And again the Spirit of Pity whispered, "Why?"

In a few pages of preface the author touches on the roots of his own so-called "pessimism," and briefly declares his trust in "the exploration of reality" as "the first step towards the soul's betterment." This is not to turn one's back on the illusion which is the constant solace of life.

> Call off your eyes from care
> By some determined deftness; put forth joys
> Dear as excess without the core that cloys,
> And charm Life's lourings fair.
>
> Exalt and crown the hour
> That girdles us, and fill it full with glee,
> Blind glee, excelling aught could ever be
> Were heedfulness in power.

But the illusion, he would say, must not be deception; it will yield its balm sweeter and more wholesome and healing if we have honestly reckoned with the pain and drabness of the real, knowing that it is there even when we escape in imagination. In this fully measured interplay of Life and Art is the true anodyne for the unintelligible burdens and mysteries.

> That night, that night,
> That song, that song;
> O drink to its recalled delight,
> Though tears may throng!

Mr. Hardy's most distinctive form of Art—the concentration of dramatic poignancy in lyric form—has a number of fresh illustrations in this new sheaf of verse.

> "A bosom too full for her age; in her lips too voluptuous a look."
> It may be. But who put it there? Assuredly it was not I!

No writer of our day has brought to a finer or a bolder point these "obstinate questionings" that no creed or creedlessness can smother.

Mr. Hardy confesses himself perplexed by these latest times, with their "plethoric growth of knowledge simultaneously with the stunting of wisdom"—"we seem threatened with a new Dark Age." But he affirms his own hope of the reconciliation of religion and rationality through "the interfusing effect of poetry," and in one brief sentence suggests what will impart a fresh revealing unity to the long and patient harvest of his lyrical genius.

"The Morning Post" 23.5.22.

LATE LYRICS AND EARLIER

Mr. Hardy's New Poems.

PUBLISHED TO-DAY.

LATE LYRICS AND EARLIER. With Many Other Verses. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan and Co. 7s. 6d. net.

About half the poems in this volume have been written lately, we are told in the author's "Apology"; the rest are older, having been held over in manuscript during war-time. The "Apology" (a word we like not to hear from the lips of the greatest of our poets, who seeks truth in the first instance, hardly stooping to find beauty by the way) is in essence a vindication of the philosophy of life which gives a fibre of austere thought even to his most emotional lyric. Mr. Hardy has his dream (who ever doubted it to be so?), and is not to be confuted by young reviewers who talk of the "dark gravity of his ideas," or of "Mr. Hardy refusing consolation" or even by the stern pronouncement: "This view of life is not mine" by his oldest friend (and ours), Mr. Frederic Harrison. A line from "In Tenebris," printed twenty years ago and written much earlier:

> If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst

is really the true statement and justification of his stand-point which has not altered, as those who have read him from the first will admit, since "Under the Greenwood Tree" was written. "It may be a forlorn hope," to quote the final passage of this *apologia pro vita mea*, "a mere dream, that of an alliance between religion, which must be retained unless the world is to perish, and complete rationality, which must also be retained unless the world is to perish, by means of the interfusing effect of poetry—" the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; the impassioned expression of all science," as it was defined by an English poet who was quite orthodox in his ideas. But if it be true, as Comte argued, that advance is never in a straight line, but in a looped orbit, we may, in the aforesaid ominous moving backward, be doing it *pour mieux sauter*, drawing back for a spring. I repeat that I forlornly hope so, notwithstanding the supercilious rejection of hope by Schopenhauer, von Hartmann and other philosophers down to Einstein, who have my respect." So much for the Pandora's box of Mr. Hardy's pessimism (as much prated of as Thackeray's cynicism or the vulgarity of Dickens and with equal lack of reason) which, it will be perceived, has Hope at the bottom, even though crippled by confinement and feeling forlorn for want of a spring dress of *joie-de-vivre*.

It is a happy omen, surely, that the volume begins with a spring-tide stanza suitable to this glorious opening of the true English May, the very day when Queen Guenevere went a-maying in the fields that are now Westminster, little dreaming of the sorrow that was to come of it all. We like the weather, and so does this so-called arch-pessimist and the bird of ill character whose voice punctuates the dizzy hours:

> This is the weather the cuckoo likes,
> And so do I;
> When showers betumble the chestnut spikes,
> And nestlings fly:
> And the little brown nightingale bills his best,
> And they sit outside at "The Travellers' Rest,"
> And maids come forth sprig-muslin drest,
> And citizens dream of the south and west,
> And so do I.

Was it written lately or long ago? The Moon at any rate is not for him either of green cheese (fantasy) or of honey (romance), but a spectral observer of all our follies in the night-time, keeping up with us in the most wayward wanderings:

> —How many a year
> Have you kept pace with me,
> Wan Woman of the waste up there,
> Behind a hedge, or the bare
> Bough of a tree!
>
> No novelty are you,
> O Lady of all my time,
> Veering unbid into my view
> Whether I near Death's mow,
> Or Life's top cyme!

There was never a true and wondrous o[ne]-ment with his "West-of-Wessex Gi[rl] as blithe as blithe could be," which spe[aks] for the young amongst us a homely lyric:

> But never I squired my Wessex girl
> In jaunts to Hoe or street
> When hearts were high in beat,
> Nor saw her in the marbled ways
> Where market-people meet,
> That in her bounding early days
> Were friendly with her feet.

Disappointment and Disillusionment [take] the colour from so many of these so[ngs] and kill the music, too, when the refr[ain's] aspect is too deeply pondered, but all th[is] does not constitute the dark, malignan[t] pessimism of which the poet has been s[o] often accused. In "The Dissemblers" h[e] gently chides the love that will not confe[ss] itself even in the conversation of lovers b[y] themselves:

> "It was not you I came to please,
> Only myself," flipped she;
> "I like this spot of phantasies,
> And thought you far from me."
> But O, he was the secret spell
> That led her to the lea!
>
> "It was not she who shaped my ways,
> Or works, or thoughts," he said,
> "I scarcely marked her living days,
> Or missed her much when dead."
> But O, his joyance knew its knell
> When daisies hid her head!

It is not easy to quote from him, becaus[e] always the thought and often the emotio[n] (though that sometimes ceases to flow o[r] burn all suddenly) runs through a whol[e] poem, and all must be given or none a[t] all. Alas! that he cannot take a presen[t] joy without thinking of its past, as whe[n] he hears a bird singing the same song a[s] of old, with never a fault in its airy chime[s,] and cannot stay the reflection:

> —But it's not the selfsame bird.—
> No: perished to dust is he. . . .
> As also are those who heard
> That song with me.

But this is not pessimism—unless to be o[ld] and not forget is to be a pessimist, in whic[h] case all the generations that dwindle are i[n] a perilous estate. Friendship, however, [is] the prop and stay of true-love (which [is] truth and love straitly intertwined, to [use] the old sweet English phrase), and this [is the] pessimistic doctrine he sets forth in t[he] song of a girl who does not wish her beau[ty] praised in any "world-wide degree":

> But do for ever softly say:
> "From now unto the end
> Come weal, come wanzing, come what may,
> Dear, I will be your friend."
>
> I hate my beauty in the glass:
> My beauty is not I:
> I wear it: none cares whether, alas,
> Its wearer live or die!

There is a quaint parable of mother[hood's] eternal emotion, that anxious an[d] unaging thing, in "The Whitewashe[d] Wall," under the blank, colourless cleanli[-]ness of which lay hid a drawing of he[r] son's shadow made long ago:

> But she knows he's there. And when she yearn[s]
> For him, deep in the labouring night,
> She sees him as close at hand, and turns
> To him under his sheet of white.

Lastly, there is an "Epitaph," which ma[y] be taken as the "moral" (the word her[e] causes a little smile) of this book of bitter[-]sweet, wholesome, tonic verse:

> I never cared for Life: Life cared for me,
> And hence I owed it some fidelity.
> It now says, "Cease; at length thou hast learn[t]
> to grind
> Sufficient toll for an unwilling mind,
> And I dismiss thee—not without regard
> That thou didst ask no ill-advised reward,
> Nor sought in me much more than thou couldst
> find."

78 The Birmingham Gazette 24.5.22.

HARDY.

POET, BUT STILL REALIST.

Late Lyrics and Earlier. By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan.) 7s. 6d.

In his "Epitaph" Mr. Thomas Hardy, now 81, says:—"I never cared for Life; Life cared for me, And hence I owe it some fidelity." That last line is the best answer to those who charge the greatest of living poets with pessimism.

He looks before and after, but he rarely pines, and certainly never whines, for what is not. He would go all the way with beauty in the sense of following her at all hazards, but also in the sense of not yielding himself solely to the joy of the moment, but remembering the pain in which beauty was born and the mutability which threatens it in the future.

This and his earlier utterance:—"If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the worst"—is all part of his debt of fidelity, and if sometimes there is a a bitter tang that is a common property of tonics.

Hardy has always been one who sought to see things as they are, and the preface to his last volume frankly recognises "the precarious prosperity of English verse at the present day." He adds:

> And a forward conjecture scarcely permits hopes of a better time, unless men's tendencies should change. So indeed of all art, literature, and "high thinking" nowadays.

That is the other side of Hardy's honesty, and it is not enough to dismiss such a declaration by so acute a judge with talk of "characteristic pessimism" and comparisons with the gloomy Dean. It has to be faced "if way to Better there be."

A New Alliance.

As to remedy, part is conveyed in that clause "unless men's tendencies change"; the other part, for Mr. Hardy, lies in the use of "the interfusing effect of poetry" to bring an alliance between religion and rationality.

There are points from the preface which suggest a comparison between Hardy and Shelley, both writing after a great war, and both enormously concerned for the using of poetry to bring better things. Such a comparison would indeed be a worthy subject for treatment by the greatest of our literary critics.

Half of the poems in this new volume, Mr. Hardy tells us, are of quite recent date; but his manner and his vision have changed so little that it would not be easy from internal evidence to date them. Through all runs that sense of change which makes the parallel with Shelley so interesting. One of the most telling expressions of it is in "The Master and the Leaves" (1917).

> We are budding, master, budding,
> We of your favourite tree;
> March drought and April flooding
> Arouse us merrily,
> Our stemlets newly shedding
> And yet you do not see.
>
> We are fully woven for summer
> In stuff of limpest green,
> The twitterer and the hummer
> Here rest of nights, unseen,
> While like a long-roll drummer
> The nightjar thrills the treen.
>
> We are turning yellow, Master,
> And next we are turning red,
> And faster then and faster
> Shall seek our rocky bed,
> All wasted in disaster,
> But you lift not your head.
>
> I mark your early going,
> And that you'll soon be clay,
> I have seen your summer showing
> As in my youthful day;
> But why I seem unknowing
> Is too sunk in to say!"

One has to quote the whole of a poem like that, because, as with so many of Hardy's poems, much of its beauty lies in the whole construction, the building up—for our greatest poet has never lost the sense of architecture, which was his earliest art.

In Time's Cogs.

There is also the same philosophy of change, touched with irony and a high pity in the poem "Going and Staying."

> The moving sun-shapes on the spray,
> The sparkles where the brook was flowing,
> Pink faces, plightings, moonlit May,
> These were the things we wished would stay;
> But they were going.
>
> Seasons of blankness as of snow,
> The silent bleed of a world decaying,
> The moan of multitudes in woe,
> These were the things we wished would go;
> But they were staying.
>
> Then we looked closelier at Time,
> And saw his ghostly arms revolving
> To sweep off woeful things with prime,
> Things sinister with things sublime
> Alike dissolving.

This is, of course, only one phase of Hardy's poetry; and there are many phases in this book—the passion for country rustics who might have come out of any Wessex novel, and swift blows from life upon love. Wherever one taps, the draught is wholesome for all its bitterness. And sometimes it is not bitter at all. "A Woman's Trust," for instance, is as inspiring and optimistic as Browning.

E. A. C.

ing cutting from The Nation & the Athenaeum - May 27 1922

MANY of my readers must by this time be familiar with the masterly and inspiring "apology" which is Thomas Hardy's preface to his new volume of poems, a volume of wonderful sweetness, of tuneful and excellent variety, and of a humanity as tender and considerate as ever this great humanist conceived in prose or in verse. To me the interest of this "apology" is twofold. It has a message, a correcting, even a stern message, to our younger writers. I wonder whether they will listen to it? Hardy is their idol; the Master to whose form and literary message they profess themselves, and with truth, most sensitive. Has he not then a right to warn them that "we seem threatened with a Dark Age," and to cite the limitation and triviality of the modern literary mind, its petty "knowingness," and undue cultivation of detail while "blind to the building," as one presage of that calamity? Well, I hope so; for at least I am sure they will listen to no one else. Hardy's second message seems to be more interesting still. I suppose he is thought of as the great agnostic writer, and so, in the noblest sense, he is. Nevertheless his plea is the old cry for faith and science to meet and kiss each other, if by any means the rational life of man can be maintained against the results of "the dark madness" of war and the modern battle of superstition with despair. Mr. Hardy's detailed suggestion is the most curious, and yet, maybe, the most natural of all. Everyone knows what he has done, by way of the humor and the piety of the old countryman, for the village church. And to-day he thinks that there is hope for and in the English Establishment. He finds a revived [illegible]d a progressive spirit, a modern feeling, a growing respect for the new teaching of science.

MR. HARDY'S APOLOGY.

Times 29 May '22

A PLEA FOR FAITH

(By A. Clutton-Brock.)

When a great man utters a manifesto in his old age, it is sure to be misunderstood and misrepresented by many who persuade themselves that at last the great man has seen the light and agrees with them; and I do not doubt that Mr. Hardy's preface to his new volume of poems will be misunderstood by those who were shocked by "Jude the Obscure." I remember that it was reviewed in a paper which prided itself on its culture under the heading "Jude the obscene."

For, in this preface, Mr. Hardy seems to be making his peace with God; and to many it will seem that he is making his peace with convention. It is written with an unmeant beauty such as only a great writer in his old age can attain to, beauty like that of a grey church long worshipped in, and with a passion not extinguished but become tranquil. He calls it an Apology, meaning an explanation or defence; but who that reads it can think that his attitude to the universe needs either; who would really accuse him of the pessimism he disclaims?

BARBARIZED TASTES.

Mr. Hardy has, perhaps, a foible for the minimum of belief; but he is on the side of those who believe, and who hold, therefore, that belief must be earned; he is against all who are glad not to believe. He himself would extenuate nothing, nor would be set down aught in malice; and now he speaks against the malice, for the moment rampant, which scribbles dirty nothings about life itself and calls them the truth. There is, he says, quoting Wordsworth, "a degrading thirst for outrageous stimulation," owing to which, "to the barbarizing of taste in younger minds by the dark madness of the late war" and to other things, "we seem threatened with a new dark age."

Clearly he connects the outbreak of monkey tricks with the loss of faith, the loss of a desire even to achieve it. "Belief in witches of Endor," he says, "is displacing the Darwinian theory and 'the truth that shall make you free'"; and, unexpectedly, he continues that he must "except many isolated minds; also the minds of men in certain worthy but small bodies of various denominations, and perhaps in the homely quarter where advance might have been the very least expected a few years back—the Church of England."

I am not here concerned with religion or the Church of England; but I am moved by the words of a great man who, near the end of his life, tells us that, to cure us of our leprosy, we must bathe in the Jordan and not in any strange drains. He would not have us believe all that the Church still professes to believe; he looks to it with hope because it shows evidence of removing those things that are shaken. But the Dark Age seems to him to threaten because men are frivolous and malicious in their unbelief; they are losing their values, denying beauty with morality, and truth with both; and the result is the dullness that Pope foretold at the end of the Dunciad, a decomposition of form as well as matter, the nothingness of free verse as of musical comedy.

A NEW DUNCIAD.

In fact, Mr. Hardy, without Pope's pleasure or particularity of vituperation, has written a Dunciad of his own. You may say, if you will, that it is age turning peevishly away from the future to the past; but, if you read with any sense of the feeling in his words, you will not say that. He writes, not like a puppet dancing to the strings of instinct, but like one who speaks because he must. He, all his life, has exercised the freest criticism; he has faced bitter truth, but for its meaning not for its ugliness, and never because he wished to vex others.

In this very volume, filled with a music of memories both sweet and bitter, he writes with the old freedom; but for him it means the enriching of life and art, not the emptying of both; the heightening of values, not the lowering of them. He may tell of things that frustrate desire; he may insist that many endings are not happy; but he is hurt by the unmeant malignity of chance; never does he rejoice in it or see only puppets in those whom chance treats as if they were puppets. To him the young dancing are beautiful and their beauty is in his verse; he does not chatter about them like a monkey about other monkeys, insisting that all life is the caprice and dirtiness of monkeys.

There are some old men that the young will listen to; and I expect this Apology to be an event of moment in our literature. Mr. Hardy speaks not only for himself but like a voice of time past and to be uttering the tradition of the ages. We cannot wonder that taste has been barbarised in some young minds that have suffered the dark madness of the war; it has been barbarised also in the minds of those who have profiteered by that madness. But the way to recovery is that one

"The Sunday Times"
28.5.22

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

"Late Lyrics and Earlier." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan. 7s. 6d.)

By EDMUND GOSSE.

Coincidence has produced in the same week a new volume of poems from our own inimitable veteran and another from the oldest living singer of France. It would be fantastic to compare the author of "The West-of-Wessex Girl" with the author of "Le Glas," but there is one thing which they have in common, the dignity with which they look back over their long stretch of life and the calm with which they await its close. M. Jean Richepin listens to the passing-bell, as it approaches, with no alarm, and Mr. Hardy writes as though its murmur had not yet reached him. Perhaps the first characteristic which strikes the reader of "Late Lyrics" is the energy with which they express emotions, hopes, and even disillusions which are not appropriate to old age. It is in vain that gossip assures us that Mr. Hardy will enter his eighty-third year next week. What does S. T. Coleridge say—or nearly say?

It cannot be that Youth is gone;
His vesper-bell hath not yet tolled,
And he was aye a masker bold,

and Mr. Hardy, as the vulgar count years, is at least twice as aged as Coleridge was when he wrote his beautiful and depressing monody. The composition of the new book, however, is tantalising. About half of the verses were written quite lately; the rest are very early compositions which were "overlooked in gathering previous collections." It would be an aid to the indolent reviewer if the poet would point out which are early and which are late. He has not done this, and he has hardly ever dated the earlier pieces. They are all mixed up together, poems of 1860 and sooner cheek by jowl with poems of 1920 and later. The trap is one which the critic will be wise not to fall into by rash conjecture. It is part of the concinnity of Mr. Hardy's talent that it has suffered very little modification in the course of sixty years.

The "Apology."

This sheaf of spring and autumn flowers of verse is tied up by a long "Apology" in prose. The author says that the launching of a volume of this kind "by one who began writing in mid-Victorian" days calls for words of excuse. I have read this preface with surprise, and even with some pain. It is very disappointing to find that Mr. Hardy seems to be unaware of the fact that he is regarded in all parts of the British Empire not merely with affection, but with reverence. Wherever English is read, that Mr. Hardy is the crowning glory of our living literature is acknowledged by every competent authority. We have other eminent and even illustrious writers in whose work we rejoice, but they are not Mr. Hardy. In 1784 Gerard Hamilton wrote: "Johnson is dead. Let us go to the next best; there is nobody. No man can be said to put you in mind of Johnson." When the author of "The Dynasts" is silent at last there will be great men left, but no man to put us in mind of him. This is now universally admitted, and it pains me that Mr. Hardy seems to be the only person not aware of the fact. He talks about being frozen by "glacial judgments," about being "cold-shouldered," he calls himself a "roughly handled writer."

This is really very disappointing. If there is a single author living whom young and old alike unite in praising it is he. Those who look most obstinately backward and those who look most recklessly forward, if they agree in nothing else, agree in praising Mr. Hardy. He hints darkly at detractors; who are the detractors of Mr. Hardy? It appears that "a Roman Catholic young man" has reproved him for the "dark gravity of his ideas." Let that young man be produced and exhibited in a glass case, for he is a rare specimen. What in all the earth does it matter what some young Catholic (or some old Protestant, if it comes to that) has been silly enough to say? There is always somebody willing to court attention by an imbecile paradox. What matters is that the whole world of letters combines to offer its homage to the unique veteran in Wessex. I am very cross about this "Apology"; what is the use of our all being so infatuated if Mr. Hardy does us this injustice? It is part of Mr. Hardy's genius, no doubt, to be sensitive, but I am vexed to find that he feels a pea under the seven matrasses of our admiration.

The Six Collections.

The book before me is the sixth volume of lyrical poetry which Mr. Hardy has put forth since he made his belated appearance as a bard in 1898. These six collections, as I have just indicated, present features of general resemblance which make it a little difficult to distinguish them. As they all contain work written at widely different times, to seek for such distinction is not, perhaps, very intelligent. Nevertheless, the mood of the poet altered from time to time as he made each selection, and it is not wholly fantastic to try to classify them before they are melted into the *corpus* of his final Poetical Works. In the "Wessex Poems," as the Victorian public, following Swinburne, Morris and Patmore, had to be attracted to a diametrically opposite mode of delivery, all the persuasive notes were rehearsed. In "Poems of the Past and Present," two strains, the military and the metaphysical, were sounded with new emphasis. Then followed "Time's Laughingstocks," where the author's unflinching severity as a moralist found expression in such pieces as "A Sunday Morning's Tragedy." In my judgment, the fourth, "Satires of Circumstance," carried a little too far the cruel passion of disillusion.

Fifthly, in "Moments of Vision," the poet developed a finer strain of pathos, a closer analysis of the vibrations of the heart, than he had cared to exhibit in its predecessors. It is, as I admit, dangerous to make these distinctions, which examination may easily seem to disprove. Nor is the sixth volume, now presented to us, very obviously to be differentiated. But I think we shall not go far wrong if we say that it is distinguished by an extraordinary richness and ingenuity of narrative effect—that is to say, it is not so largely concerned, as its immediate predecessors have been, with subjective analyses of feelings which may be attributed, if we choose, to the experience of the poet himself, as with objective observations of life, caustic, pathetic, or even trivial (but nothing is trivial to genius), treated in brief and concentrated lyrics. All is briefly told, and yet there is the stuff within these covers to fill out a score of novels.

Rustic Narrative.

From almost any page in the book examples might be taken of this objective style of lyric. Here, for instance, is the melancholy and homely tale of "The Whipper-in":—

"My father was the whipper-in—
Is still—if I'm not misled?
And now I see, where the hedge is thin,
A little spot of red;
Surely it is my father
Going to the kennel-shed?

I cursed and fought my father—aye,
And sailed to a foreign land;
And feeling sorry, I'm back, to stay,
Please God as his helping hand.
Surely it is my father
Near where the kennels stand?"

"True, Whipper-in he used to be
For twenty years or more;
And you did go away to sea,
As youths have done before.
Yes, oddly enough, that red there
Is the very coat he wore.

But he—he's dead; was thrown somehow,
And gave his back a crick,
And though that is his coat, 'tis now
The scarecrow of a rick;
You'll see when you get nearer—
'Tis spread out on a stick.

You see, when all had settled down,
Your mother's things were sold,
And she went back to her own town,
And the coat, ate out with mould,
Is now used by the farmer
For scaring, as 'tis old."

Rustic tragedy could not be made more poignant than this, nor the tale of it be more artfully concentrated.

Visions of Life.

Sometimes it is a moral picture, that is to say, a vision which takes its importance wholly from its ethical varieties, as "An Autumn Rain-scene," in which the poet rapidly enters and quits the brain of successive hurriers through the storm. Sometimes it is the bewildered consciousness of an outcast, as in "The Wanderer." The maniac woman in white, tapping her timbrel under the moon on Stinsford Hill, tells her tale; it is brief, but all we need to know. The breakdown of "The Garden Seat" recalls the faces of those who sat on it, phantoms of the past, who might all sit there now in a row, and not disturb it,

For they are as light as upper air—
They are as light as upper air!

In "Outside the Casement" a happy woman sits amongst her friends, who are all aware that in the portico without there stands a messenger who has brought tidings of appalling moment. How and when dare they break to her the news? In "The Contretemps" we have a culminating incident of the kind which Mr. Hardy alone of writers, past or present, knows how to bend to the technique of verse. In the doubtful lamp-light of a harbour bridge a man and woman rush together, clasp and part abruptly, since they find that neither knows the other. Each has an assignation, however, and the proper man and woman, arriving at the next moment, find the lover of each in the arms of a stranger. Explanation is impossible, and there is a double breach. The strangers find themselves abandoned, and what are they to do? "One pairing is as good as another, where all is venture!" But to tell Mr. Hardy's tales, robbing them of their profound and beautiful setting, is a thankless task indeed.

"The Observer"
28.5.22

MR. HARDY'S OLD AGE.

"Late Lyrics and Earlier." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan. 7s. 6d.)

"Pages from the Works of Thomas Hardy." Arranged by Ruth He[illegible], with an Introduction by Henry [illegible]. (Chatto and Windus. 7s. 6d.)

(By J. C. Squire.)

As for the second of these books, I will content myself with commending it. Mrs. Head's selection from Mr. Hardy is as good as that which she made from [illegible] Henry James. She mingles prose and verse and groups her extracts very ingeniously. Her volume will be useful to those who are imperfectly acquainted with Mr. Hardy's works, and pleasant to those who know them well.

* * *

One of the last and justest of the poems in Mr. Hardy's new book is "An Ancient to Ancients." Another might have written it, perhaps, had another had the idea; but no one else would have had the idea. An old man, over eighty, he talks at once to his coevals and to his juniors, an individual sympathetic to both, all too conscious of the equal fate of both, but convinced still of the necessity and the beauty of "carrying on." Of his own generation almost all have gone; yet to them he will say:—

Sophocles, Plato, Socrates,
Gentlemen,
Pythagoras, Thucydides,
Herodotus and Homer—yea,
Clement, Augustine, Origen,
Burnt brighter towards their setting-day,
Gentlemen.

He turns at once to the opposite benches, and he has a word, a bitter and a wistful word, for them also:—

And ye, red-lipped and smooth-browed, list,
Gentlemen;
Much is there waits you we have missed;
Much lore we leave you worth the knowing,
Much, much, has lain outside our ken;
Nay, rush not: time serves: we are going,
Gentlemen.

The latter stanza is a characteristic manifestation of Mr. Hardy's irony; its exaggeration, in one aspect, is also characteristic. But it is the other stanza that matters most, and Mr. Hardy has backed his doctrine with practice. Whatever else, in his ratiocination, he may have missed, he has at least preserved always his passion for life, his belief that the game, even if it must end invariably in defeat, must be played to the end. And it has not been merely a theoretical conviction with him; it has been a permeating faith, at once bracing his intelligence and keeping alive his heart. In the whole records of English literature it would be impossible to find, not an equal, but even an arguable near competitor, of his new book, produced by a man well over eighty. He states that some of the verses now printed are old; but the dated ones are mostly very recent, and many of those undated bear the evidence of a recent origin—on their faces. His energy, astonishingly, is unimpaired; his heart remains as fresh as a boy's; experience has deepened his understanding, but calloused none of his emotions; and, most remarkable thing of all, he has continuously improved in his art. Mr. Hardy was well-advanced in middle age when he published his first collection of poems. They were generally regarded as the interesting but crude verses of a born writer of prose. He abandoned prose; he has issued volume after volume of poetry; and the outcome of it is that there are now many people who think that he will chiefly survive as a great English poet who wrote novels in his earlier years. There seems to be some reason to suppose that such a result would not dissatisfy him. And so hale is his intelligence, so persistent his interest in his art, that, almost incredible as it might seem to one who had not read him, it would cause me surprise were he at some future date to publish the finest verses of his whole career.

(see next page for rest of cutting)

REALIST.

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He looks before and after, but he rarely pines, and certainly never whines, for what is not. He would go all the way with beauty in the sense of following her at all hazards, but also in the sense of not yielding himself solely to the joy of the moment, but remembering the pain in which beauty was born and the mutability which threatens it in the future.

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  Arouse us merrily,
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We are fully woven for summer
  In stuff of limpest green,
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We are turning yellow, Master,
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E. A. C.

...ing cutting from The Nation & the Athenaeum — May 27 1922

Many of my readers must by this time be familiar with the masterly and inspiring "apology" which is Thomas Hardy's preface to his new volume of poems, a volume of wonderful sweetness, of tuneful and excellent variety, and of a humanity as tender and considerate as ever this great humanist conceived in prose or in verse. To me the interest of this "apology" is twofold. It has a message, a correcting, even a stern message, to our younger writers. I wonder whether they will listen to it? Hardy is their idol; the Master to whose form and literary message they profess themselves, and with truth, most sensitive. Has he not then a right to warn them that "we seem threatened with a Dark Age," and to cite the limitation and triviality of the modern literary mind, its petty "knowingness," and undue cultivation of detail while "blind to the building," as one presage of that calamity? Well, I hope so; for at least I am sure they will listen to no one else. Hardy's second message seems to be more interesting still. I suppose he is thought of as the great agnostic writer, and so, in the noblest sense, he is. Nevertheless his plea is the old cry for faith and science to meet and kiss each other, if by any means the rational life of man can be maintained against the results of "the dark madness" of war and the modern battle of superstition with despair. Mr. Hardy's detailed suggestion is the most curious, and yet, maybe, the most natural of all. Everyone knows what he has done, by way of the humor and the piety of the old countryman, for the village church. And to-day he thinks that there is hope for and in the English Establishment. He finds a revived [illegible]d a progressive spirit, a modern feeling, a growing respect for the new teaching of science.

APOLOGY.

Times — 29 May '22

A PLEA FOR FAITH

(By A. Clutton-Brock.)

When a great man utters a manifesto in his old age, it is sure to be misunderstood and misrepresented by many who persuade themselves that at last the great man has seen the light and agrees with them; and I do not doubt that Mr. Hardy's preface to his new volume of poems will be misunderstood by those who were shocked by "Jude the Obscure." I remember that it was reviewed in a paper which prided itself on its culture under the heading "Jude the obscene."

For, in this preface, Mr. Hardy seems to be making his peace with God; and to many it will seem that he is making his peace with convention. It is written with an unmeant beauty such as only a great writer in his old age can attain to, beauty like that of a grey church long worshipped in, and with a passion not extinguished but become tranquil. He calls it an Apology, meaning an explanation or defence; but who that reads it can think that his attitude to the universe needs either; who would really accuse him of the pessimism he disclaims?

BARBARIZED TASTES.

Mr. Hardy has, perhaps, a foible for the minimum of belief; but he is on the side of those who believe, and who hold, therefore, that belief must be earned; he is against all who are glad not to believe. He himself would extenuate nothing, nor would he set down aught in malice; and now he speaks against the malice, for the moment rampant, which scribbles dirty nothings about life itself and calls them the truth. There is, he says, quoting Wordsworth, "a degrading thirst for outrageous stimulation," owing to which, "to the barbarizing of taste in younger minds by the dark madness of the late war" and to other things, "we seem threatened with a new dark age."

Clearly he connects the outbreak of monkey tricks with the loss of faith, the loss of a desire even to achieve it. "Belief in witches of Endor," he says, "is displacing the Darwinian theory and the truth that shall make you free"; and, unexpectedly, he continues that he must "except many isolated minds; also the minds of men in certain worthy but small bodies of various denominations, and perhaps in the homely quarter where advance might have been the very least expected a few years back—the Church of England."

I am not here concerned with religion or the Church of England; but I am moved by the words of a great man who, near the end of his life, tells us that, to cure us of our leprosy, we must bathe in the Jordan and not in any strange drains. He would not have us believe all that the Church still professes to believe; he looks to it with hope because it shows evidence of removing those things that are shaken. But the Dark Age seems to him to threaten because men are frivolous and malicious in their unbelief; they are losing their values, denying beauty with morality, and truth with both; and the result is the dullness that Pope foretold at the end of the Dunciad, a decomposition of form as well as matter, the nothingness of free verse as of musical comedy.

A NEW DUNCIAD.

In fact, Mr. Hardy, without Pope's pleasure or particularity of vituperation, has written a Dunciad of his own. You may say, if you will, that it is age turning peevishly away from the future to the past; but, if you read with any sense of the feeling in his words, you will not say that. He writes, not like a puppet dancing to the strings of instinct, but like one who speaks because he must. He, all his life, has exercised the freest criticism; he has faced bitter truth, but for its meaning not for its ugliness, and never because he wished to vex others.

In this very volume, filled with a music of memories both sweet and bitter, he writes with the old freedom; but for him it means the enriching of life and art, not the emptying of both; the heightening of values, not the lowering of them. He may tell of things that frustrate desire; he may insist that many endings are not happy; but he is hurt by the unmeant malignity of chance; never does he rejoice in it or see only puppets in those whom chance treats as if they were puppets. To him the young dancing are beautiful and their beauty is in his verse; he does not chatter about them like a monkey about other monkeys, insisting that all life is the caprice and dirtiness of monkeys.

There are some old men that the young will listen to; and I expect this Apology to be an event of moment in our literature. Mr. Hardy speaks not only for himself but like a voice of time past and to be uttering the tradition of the ages. We cannot wonder that taste has been barbarized in some young minds that have suffered the dark madness of the war; it has been barbarized also in the minds of those who have profiteered by that madness. But the way to recovery is that the young shall not take their barbarizing seriously, that it shall seem to them not philosophy but pathology.

No doubt many are sick of it already and see that it is merely catabolic and leads nowhere even in art. The words of the greatest living writer, and one whose writing is still young, must encourage them in their recovery. They have only to read these poems to see that composition is better than decomposition, that love and death still bring a poet more luck than dead cats and cigarette ends.

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

"Late Lyrics and Earlier." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan. 7s. 6d.)

By EDMUND GOSSE.

Coincidence has produced in the same week a new volume of poems from our own inimitable veteran and another from the oldest living singer of France. It would be fantastic to compare the author of "The West-of-Wessex Girl" with the author of "Le Glas," but there is one thing which they have in common, the dignity with which they look back over their long stretch of life and the calm with which they await its close. M. Jean Richepin listens to the passing-bell, as it approaches, with no alarm, and Mr. Hardy writes as though its murmur had not yet reached him. Perhaps the first characteristic which strikes the reader of "Late Lyrics" is the energy with which they express emotions, hopes, and even disillusions which are not appropriate to old age. It is in vain that gossip assures us that Mr. Hardy will enter his eighty-third year next week. What does S. T. Coleridge say—or nearly say?

> It cannot be that Youth is gone;
> His vesper-bell hath not yet tolled,
> And he was aye a masker bold,

and Mr. Hardy, as the vulgar count years, is at least twice as aged as Coleridge was when he wrote his beautiful and depressing monody. The composition of the new book, however, is tantalising. About half of the verses were written quite lately; the rest are very early compositions which were "overlooked in gathering previous collections." It would be an aid to the indolent reviewer if the poet would point out which are early and which are late. He has not done this, and he has hardly ever dated the earlier pieces. They are all mixed up together, poems of 1860 and earlier cheek by jowl with poems of 1920 and later. The trap is one which the critic will be wise not to fall into by rash conjecture. It is part of the concinnity of Mr. Hardy's talent that it has suffered very little modification in the course of sixty years.

The "Apology."

This sheaf of spring and autumn flowers of verse is tied up by a long "Apology" in prose. The author says that the launching of a volume of this kind "by one who began writing in mid-Victorian" days calls for words of excuse. I have read this preface with surprise, and even with some pain. It is very disappointing to find that Mr. Hardy seems to be unaware of the fact that he is regarded in all parts of the British Empire not merely with affection, but with reverence. Wherever English is read, that Mr. Hardy is the crowning glory of our living literature is acknowledged by every competent authority. We have other eminent and even illustrious writers in whose work we rejoice, but they are not Mr. Hardy. In 1784 Gerard Hamilton wrote: "Johnson is dead. Let us go to the next best; there is nobody. No man can be said to put you in mind of Johnson." When the author of "The Dynasts" is silent at last there will be great men left, but no man to put us in mind of him. This is now universally admitted, and it pains me that Mr. Hardy seems to be the only person not aware of the fact. He talks about being frozen by "glacial judgments," about being "cold-shouldered," he calls himself a "roughly handled writer."

This is really very disappointing. If there is a single author living whom young and old alike unite in praising it is he. Those who look most obstinately backward and those who look most recklessly forward, if they agree in nothing else, agree in praising Mr. Hardy. He hints darkly at detractors; who are the detractors of Mr. Hardy? It appears that "a Roman Catholic young man" has reproved him for the "dark gravity of his ideas." Let that young man be produced and exhibited in a glass case, for he is a rare specimen. What in all the earth does it matter what some young Catholic (or some old Protestant, if it comes to that) has been silly enough to say? There is always somebody willing to court attention by an imbecile paradox. What matters is that the whole world of letters combines to offer its homage to the unique veteran in Wessex. I am very cross about this "Apology"; what is the use of our all being so infatuated if Mr. Hardy does us this injustice? It is part of Mr. Hardy's genius, no doubt, to be sensitive, but I am vexed to find that he feels a pea under the seven matrasses of our admiration.

[illegible] selection, and [illegible] not wholly fantastic to try to classify them before they are melted into the corpus of his final Poetical Works. In the "Wessex Poems," as the Victorian public, following Swinburne, Morris and Patmore, had to be attracted to a diametrically opposite mode of delivery, all the persuasive notes were rehearsed. In "Poems of the Past and Present," two strains, the military and the metaphysical, were sounded with new emphasis. Then followed "Time's Laughingstocks," where the author's unflinching severity as a moralist found expression in such pieces as "A Sunday Morning's Tragedy." In my judgment, the fourth, "Satires of Circumstance," carried a little too far the cruel passion of disillusion.

Fifthly, in "Moments of Vision," the poet developed a finer strain of pathos, a closer analysis of the vibrations of the heart, than he had cared to exhibit in its predecessors. It is, as I admit, dangerous to make these distinctions, which examination may easily seem to disprove. Nor is the sixth volume, now presented to us, very obviously to be differentiated. But I think we shall not go far wrong if we say that it is distinguished by an extraordinary richness and ingenuity of narrative effect—that is to say, it is not so largely concerned, as its immediate predecessors have been, with subjective analyses of feelings which may be attributed, if we choose, to the experience of the poet himself, as with objective observations of life, caustic, pathetic, or even trivial (but nothing is trivial to genius), treated in brief and concentrated lyrics. All is briefly told, and yet there is the stuff within these covers to fill out a score of novels.

Rustic Narrative.

From almost any page in the book examples might be taken of this objective style of lyric. Here, for instance, is the melancholy and homely tale of "The Whipper-in":—

> "My father was the whipper-in—
> Is still—if I'm not misled?
> And now I see, where the hedge is thin,
> A little spot of red;
> Surely it is my father
> Going to the kennel-shed?
>
> I cursed and fought my father—aye,
> And sailed to a foreign land;
> And feeling sorry, I'm back, to stay,
> Please God as his helping hand.
> Surely it is my father
> Near where the kennels stand?"
>
> "True, Whipper-in he used to be
> For twenty years or more;
> And you did go away to sea,
> As youths have done before.
> Yes, oddly enough, that red there
> Is the very coat he wore.
>
> But he—he's dead; was thrown somehow,
> And gave his back a crick,
> And though that is his coat, 'tis now
> The scarecrow of a rick;
> You'll see when you get nearer—
> 'Tis spread out on a stick.
>
> You see, when all had settled down,
> Your mother's things were sold,
> And she went back to her own town,
> And the coat, ate out with mould,
> Is now used by the farmer
> For scaring, as 'tis old."

Rustic tragedy could not be made more poignant than this, nor the tale of it be more artfully concentrated.

Visions of Life.

Sometimes it is a moral picture, that is to say, a vision which takes its importance wholly from its ethical varieties, as "An Autumn Rain-scene," in which the poet rapidly enters and quits the brain of successive hurriers through the storm. Sometimes it is the bewildered consciousness of an outcast, as in "The [illegible]anderer." The maniac woman in white, [illegible]ping her timbrel under the moon on Stinsford Hill, tells her tale; it is brief, but all we need to know. The breakdown of "The Garden Seat" recalls the faces of those who sat on it, phantoms of the past, who might all sit there now in a row, and not disturb it,

> For they are as light as upper air—
> They are as light as upper air!

In "Outside the Casement" a happy woman sits amongst her friends, who are all aware that in the portico without there stands a messenger who has brought tidings of appalling moment. How and when dare they break to her the news? In "The Contretemps" we have a culminating incident of the kind which Mr. Hardy alone of writers, past or present, knows how to bend to the technique of verse. In the doubtful lamp-light of a harbour bridge a man and woman rush together, clasp and part abruptly, since they find that neither knows the other. Each has an assignation, however, and the proper man and woman, arriving at the next moment, find the lover of each in the arms of a stranger. Explanation is impossible, and there is a double breach. The strangers find themselves abandoned, and what are they to do? "One pairing is as good as another, where all is venture!" But to tell Mr. Hardy's tales, robbing them of their profound and beautiful setting, is a thankless task indeed.

MR. HARDY'S OLD AGE.

"Late Lyrics and Ear[illegible]lier." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan. [illegible] 7s. 6d.)

"Pages from the Works [illegible] Thomas Hardy." Arranged by Ruth He[illegible]d, with an Introduction by Henry N[illegible]ond. (Chatto and Windus. 7s. 6d.)

(By J. C. Squ[illegible]re.)

As for the second of the[illegible] books, I will content myself with commen[illegible]ding it. Mrs. Head's selection from Mr. H[illegible]rdy is as good as that which she made from [illegible] Henry James. She mingles prose and verse [illegible] groups her extracts very ingeniously. [illegible] volume will be useful to those who ar[illegible] imperfectly acquainted with Mr. Hardy's [illegible] works, and pleasant to those who know the[illegible] well.

* * *

One of the last and [illegible] of [illegible] the poems in Mr. Hardy's new book is "A[illegible] Ancient to Ancients." Another might have [illegible] written it, perhaps, had another had the id[illegible]a; but no one else would have had the ide[illegible]. An old man, over eighty, he talks at o[illegible] to his coevals and to his juniors, an [illegible]dividual sympathetic to both, all too consci[illegible] of the equal fate of both, but convinced [illegible]ll of the necessity and the beauty of "carry[illegible]ing on." Of his own generation almost all h[illegible] gone; yet to them he will say:—

> Sophocles, Plato, Socrates,
> Gentlemen,
> Pythagoras, Thucydides,
> Herodotus and Homer—yea,
> Clement, Augustine, Origen,
> Burnt brightlier towards their setting-day,
> Gentlemen.

He turns at once to the opposite benche[illegible] and he has a word, a bitter and a wistful wor[illegible], for them also:—

> And ye, red-lipped and smooth-browed, [illegible]list,
> Gentlemen;
> Much is there waits you we have miss[illegible];
> Much lore we leave you worth the kn[illegible]ing.
> Much, much, has lain outside our ken;
> Nay, rush not: time serves: we are go[illegible]
> Gentlemen.

The latter stanza is a characteristic manifestation of Mr. Hardy's irony; its exaggeration, in one aspect, is also characteristic. But it is the other stanza that matters most, and Mr. Hardy has backed his doctrine with practice. Whatever else, in his ratiocination, he may have missed, he has at least preserved always his passion for life, his belief that the game, even if it must end invariably in defeat, must be played to the end. And it has not been merely a theoretical conviction with him; it has been a permeating faith, at once bracing his intelligence and keeping alive his heart. In the whole records of English literature it would be impossible to find, not an equal, but even an arguable near competitor, of his new book, produced by a man well over eighty. He states that some of the verses now printed are old; but the dated ones are mostly very recent, and many of those undated bear the evidence of a recent origin—on their faces. His energy, astonishingly, is unimpaired; his heart remains as fresh as a boy's; experience has deepened his understanding, but calloused none of his emotions; and, most remarkable thing of all, he has continuously improved in his art. Mr. Hardy was well-advanced in middle age when he published his first collection of poems. They were generally regarded as the interesting but crude verses of a born writer of prose. He abandoned prose; he has issued volume after volume of poetry; and the outcome of it is that there are now many people who think that he will chiefly survive as a great English poet who wrote novels in his earlier years. There seems to be some reason to suppose that such a result would not dissatisfy him. And so hale is his intelligence, so persistent his interest in his art, that, almost incredible as it might seem to one who had not read him, it would cause no surprise were he at some future date to publish the finest verses of his whole career.

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(see next page for rest of cutting)

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Late Lyrics and Earlier, with Many other Verses. By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan & Co. 7*s.* 6*d.* net.)

These verses are not merely the work of a true poet, but of a deep and clear-sighted student of life and of human nature, who knows how to make his readers enter into his own feeling on many points. The 'Apology' prefixed to the volume states that half the verses were written quite lately; the rest are older, having been held back or overlooked till now. Mr. Hardy justifies the vein of pessimism which runs through his work both as true to the facts of life and probably a way towards that amendment for which 'these disordered years of our prematurely afflicted century' call. His aim is to see things, for, as he puts it in his 'In Tenebris':

> If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst.

Mr. Hardy holds that poetry and religion 'modulate into each other; are, indeed, often but different names for the same thing.' 'The visible signs of mental and emotional life must, like all other things, keep moving, becoming; even though at present, when belief in Witches of Endor is displacing the Darwinian theory and "the truth that shall make you free," men's minds appear to be moving backwards rather than on.' He excepts 'the minds of men in certain worthy but small bodies of various denominations,' and asks, 'What other purely English establishment than the Church, of sufficient dignity and footing, and with such strength of old association, such architectural skill, is left in this country to keep the shreds of morality together?' There is real religious feeling in not a few of the poems, especially in the two last pieces. But the value of the work lies in its vignettes of life. 'On one who lived and died where he was born' describes the man of eighty going up the stairs to end his days where he was born. The view of Keats at Lulworth Cove a century ago has its own pathos, and many of the ironies of life are powerfully brought out. The girl who married the fiddler for music at will and found that her husband never played at home is a quaint story, and 'The Little Old Table' creaks of the friend who gave it. Some of the songs have a music of their own, and no one ought to miss the tribute to the pet cat—'Last Words to a Dumb Friend.' 'The Old Neighbour and the New' are the new rector and his predecessor, 'who palely nods' to his old friend whilst the new-comer explains his plans for the parish. The poems are short, but that makes them the more vivid and attractive. It is a piece of work for which lovers of poetry and students of human nature will alike be grateful.

London Quarterly Review June 1922.

Mr. Hardy's liveliness is not evident on in the poems which this substantial ne volume contains; it shows also in the pr face. The preface contains some vigorou controversial remarks about certain critic who have accused him of pessimism. Me have said that Mr. Hardy looked on th darker side of life; his answer is that he re fuses to pass facts by as the Levite passe the afflicted, and that in any event "If wa to the Better there be, it exacts a full loo at the Worst." "Should," he asks, "a shaper of such stuff as dreams are made o disregard considerations of what is cus tomary and expected, and apply himself t the real function of poetry, the application o ideas to life?" I imagine that nobody in his senses would wish Mr. Hardy to burke the truth as he sees it, or to suppress his honest opinions because they might offend other people's susceptibilities. Nor, indeed, if one will survey his work as a whole and not single out the expression of moods darker than usual or sentences written under the temporary influence of a rationalist logic, can one call him a denier. His deepest desires might at any time have been deduced; in "The Oxen" and in certain passages of this new preface, they are explicit; he would like to believe.

Some men have faith; many, very many, live in what Dr. Johnson called "that middle state between hypocrisy and conviction"; some find insufficient grounds for belief and hanker after it without getting it; some, so they assure us, see no purpose in the Universe, no hope of ultimate justice, no immortality in the soul, and are content to see none. Mr. Hardy was never amongst these last; there are moments when he has been a transient sojourner among the first. He has been rather a passionate sceptic than a pessimist. Yet, in a less general sense, there is some excuse for those who have given him the name. He himself refers to "good Panglossians," to whom his poems may seem "to embody strange and disrespectful conceptions of this best of all possible worlds"; I think that some who are hardly of the opinion of Dr. Pangloss might interpose that the world, however far from grace, does not deserve quite everything that Mr. Hardy has said of it. He does not slander human nature; that never. But he does, it might be urged, show a tendency to load the dice slightly in favour of malign Fate. I once heard a man say that "no husband in Hardy was ever safely dead"; they were always liable to reappear on the day of the second wedding. The joke was not unfair; Mr. Hardy does incline to favour the story not of normal, but of abnormal, ill-luck; he does show an astonishing ingenuity in constructing stories of misfortune, and especially of marital misfortune. There are several, startlingly summarised, in this volume of poems; as, for instance, "A Wife Comes Back." That he is preoccupied with the passage of time, with the relics of former days, with ghosts and tombstones, faded muslins, and old tunes, is nothing strange; the contemplation of transience and the regret of things gone is the mainspring of half our deepest emotions, and the source of half our poetry. Melancholy—in his poetry—is usually natural to a poet; doubt is common; that Mr. Hardy has been criticised in the way he suggests has been due, I think, not to his prevailing sadness or to his agnosticism, but to his habit of contemplating with too constant an eye the oddest pranks of Fate.

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That with all deference; to pursue it farther would be to court an error frequent in criticism of poetry: to forget the work in examination of the real or assumed doctrine. A doctrine, or conflicting doctrines, may underlie a poet's work; a doctrine may even occasionally be formulated in it; but no desire to argue or to disseminate a view of the universe was ever the prime motive of a poet when engaged in composition. Something, whether one of the innumerable natural images of truth, or a human relation, or an aspect of man's temporal life, or an "idea" about the Universe, has aroused an emotion, and from that emotion comes a poem. Mr. Hardy, almost always, has written like a poet; his work has come unpolluted from the spring, and he has let it come as it might. And so powerful has his emotion usually been that he has been able to write with a rare spontaneity. He is not without art, not without artifice; the variety of his metres and his stanzas is extraordinary. Yet, however complex his form, it seems to be born with the subject; and it is certain that his words gush out with such power that he can make things seem musical which no other man dare say, and incorporate in his melodies words which in any other poet's verses would sound cacophonous. You get lines like:—

> As she blent that dexterous voice
> With the ditty of her choice,
> And banished our annoys
> Thereawhile

or

> When mailing seems at cease
> In the vague void of night-time,
> And heaven's wide roomage stormless
> Between the dusk and light-time
> And fear at last is formless,
> We call the allurement Peace.

Had any other man written "our annoys thereawhile" or referred to heaven's "roomage," we should have groaned; the force of Mr. Hardy's sincerity and vision makes one not merely accept them but like them. In the second passage he is so concentrated on his novel conception of that false tranquillity that disguises all our mortal struggle at certain hours that he scarcely seems to notice himself what words he uses; and we do not notice them either. But in many poems there is no flaw even on the second and more cold-blooded reading. "The Voice of the Past" (in Mrs. Head's book) is the type of poem as musical as any that exists, words married to tune, communicating an exquisite tenderness.

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It is the memory of that tenderness that remains with one; of a sensitive, generous heart which never ceases to feel. In all Mr. Hardy's work the dominant note is that of Pity, not a pity born of condescension or superiority, but the pity of one suffering bodied in flesh and born to fall who sustains the inevitable miseries of this transient life, and especially for those whose circumstances, of character or of [illegible] rob of what fleeting happiness they [illegible] as he sees it, enjoy between mystery and mystery. In his last poem he communes with himself, questioning his motives as honest men must question their motives disputing the value of his achievement as all men must do who have the sense of eternity. The last verse runs:—

> "You taught not that which you set about."
> Said my own voice talking to me;
> "That the greatest of things is charity"
> —And the sticks burnt low, and the fire went out,
> And my voice ceased talking to me.

He will find, on this score, no other accuser than himself. It is from the very depths of that compassion that the poignancy of his pessimism—if he will allow the word—springs. He stands above the world and—

> Wistful voices call
> "We are fain! We are fain!" from everywhere
> On Earth's bewildering ball.

Those voices are always in his ears, and their echoes are present in all his poetry. Had all of us, who call ourselves Christians, as much pity and as much love, the ball might be a little less bewildering.

"Times Literary Supplement"

1 6. 22.

MR. HARDY'S POEMS.

LATE LYRICS AND EARLIER. With many other verses. By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan. 7s. 6d. net.)

This book is important because of the "Apology" which precedes it; and we shall say little of that only because we are eager to speak of the poems. It is a defence against the charge of pessimism and a meditation upon the state of poetry, and of the human mind, at this moment. Mr. Hardy wrotes prose as well as ever he did; as for poetry, it is of all his periods in this book. Half of it, he tells us, was written lately. Of the rest, some is older and some quite early. Of the last he says, "A freshness now unattainable seemed to make up for their inexperience and to justify their inclusion."

But what we notice in his verse, early or late, is the high level of his own peculiar accomplishment. There are failures, but they seem to be in the theme rather than in the execution; he has a taste, sometimes, for practical jokes of fate or chance, which are not interesting poetically because they *are* practical jokes, or would be if we could believe in a joker. They set a problem, but not an artistic one, since neither we nor Mr. Hardy can enjoy the cruel comedy of them. In them we see symptoms of a suppressed philosophy, which needs a vent other than verse.

But Mr. Hardy, like Wordsworth, is remarkable among poets for his choice of themes interesting in themselves, and for his power of heightening their interest by a treatment detached yet poetical. The weakness of the romantic movement was that it insisted on the interest and value of emotions in themselves. Mr. Hardy is in the great tradition, not of romantic poetry, but of poetry, in that he gives us the causes of emotion rather than his emotions, and by that means makes us share them. In him, in the very soul of his verse, you feel a shyness, almost an unwillingness of emotion, which causes him to avoid the obvious beauties of verse, instinctively rather than on any conscious æsthetic principle. He likes to write about an incident which has caused him to feel rather than about the feelings it has aroused; and his effort is to draw the incident in its essence and particularity. Through long, intense, and patient effort he is a master of such drawing; he can give the character of an incident, as Rembrandt can give the character of a person, in a few strokes of extreme precision and unforced emphasis, so that we have both the relish of fact and the beauty of art. He is not a Dutch painter in the little, prosaic sense, but always a poet, however homely the sound of his verse. But the best way to prove the point is to give an example, and so we quote the whole of one of the finest of his poems. It is called the "Whitewashed Wall."

Why does she turn in that shy soft way
Whenever she stirs the fire,
And kiss to the chimney-corner wall,
As if entranced to admire
Its whitewashed bareness more than the sight
Of a rose, in richest green?
I have known her long, but this raptured rite
I never before have seen.

Well, once when her son cast his shadow there,
A friend took a pencil and drew him
Upon that flame-lit wall. And the lines
Had a lifelike semblance to him.
And there long stayed his familiar look;
But one day, ere she knew,
The whitener came to cleanse the nook,
And covered the face from view.

"Yes," he said; "my brush goes on with a rush,
And the draught is buried under;
When you have to whiten old cots and brighten,
What else can you do, I wonder?"
But she knows he's there. And when she yearns
For him, deep in the labouring night,
She sees him as close at hand, and turns
To him under his sheet of white.

Here the poem is as interesting as a story; it *is* a story artfully told, with beginning, middle, and end just where they should be; and it seems to be prosaically told. At least there is no line, until you reach the last four, that stops you with its beauty; and you run through the beauty of the last four to reach the end; and then the beauty of the whole takes you and flows back through the whole poem. There is also a contrast between the matter of factness of the style and the dancing metre, and between both and the mystery of the story, which seems the contrast of life itself, with its treble counterpoint of routine, of rhythm, and of human passion. The poetry here is not indulged or pampered by the poet, yet it wins and moves us all the more because its victory is hard won, because it has had to struggle for its life. It is interesting, technically, to note that the metre of the first four lines of the last stanza is exactly that of Shelley's Cloud; yet how differently used. You can quote four lines from the Cloud and they will enchant with their beauty; these four lines by themselves would be nothing, but they have cumulative power.

In fact, Mr. Hardy, like Wordsworth, is a master of cumulative power. He has not Wordsworth's music, but, being a novelist, he can tell a story better, and he has, more completely than any other English poet, turned this novelist's skill to the uses of poetry; he has heightened his prose into poetry without losing its prosaic virtues. You must read him carefully to see how verses written to an obvious, almost jog-trot, tune escape the obvious and the jog-trot by their particularity:—

And that calm eve when you walked up the stair,
After a gaiety prolonged and rare,
No thought soever
That you might never
Walk down again struck me as I stood there.

The dance of words there is subtilized by the fullness of the sense, as if it were a dancer putting dramatic meaning into every step of a familiar pattern. And the second line—"After a gaiety prolonged and rare"—that is full and precise like prose, yet it moves in the dance; and the whole elaborate pattern all through the poem never masters the poet or becomes a mere mechanism; he masters it, like an old fiddler in the street playing an old tune with a personal passion which makes it that tune and that rendering and no other.

The thought of a fiddler in the street often comes to our minds as we read these poems, because there is a simple kind of bowing and scraping in them which disguises the mastery and because they do actually seem filled with the memory of tunes sung or fiddled in west country towns. Or you may say that it is all like folk-song, not artificially revived or faked, but written naturally and better. Mr. Hardy is the favourite of the younger poets, and one can see why. They are in full reaction against the swelling, wailing emotions of the romantic movement and their accompanying technique they are terribly afraid of making fools of themselves if they write of love, or the stars, or roses, and the like. But Mr. Hardy can do it drily as it were, by his presentment of incidents; so that they are not made uncomfortable by the emotional manners of a past generation. He does not fall on your neck and kiss you on both cheeks in public, but seems to be talking in a quiet rational way; yet he moves you, moves even the young poets who have set their lips so strong against the roses and raptures, and the lilies and languors, of Swinburne. And still there is a vent for sentimentality in it all, though sentimentality [illegible]blimated in some curious way so that [illegible] seems to have lost all its grossness by e[illegible]ng, like faint music, from the past. Mr. Hardy can give u[illegible]riations on "She wore a w[illegible] of rose and how beautiful they are:—

In woodlands I have kn[illegible]n
When boughs were mourning
In the rain-reek she has
Wild-haired and water[illegible]
And once or twice she has [illegible]
As she pomped along the s[illegible]
Court-clad, ere quite she had [illegible]me,
A glance from her chariot-seat.
But in my memoried passion
For ever more stands she
In the gown of fading fashion
She wore that night when we,
Doomed long to part, assembled
In the snug small room; yea, when
She sang with lips that trembled,
"Shall I see his face again?"

There is a kind of tune, both in music and in verse, that seems born of memory, and shaped to carry it on for ever. It has a beauty, obvious, irresistible, but easily spoilt if forced. Mr. Hardy here and elsewhere spoils it no more than Mozart does in *Voi che sapete*. This kind of tune dies out of literature and music when they become silly, conceited and clever, but Mr. Hardy is keeping it alive still; he is handing on the divine sound that seems to come out of the past of all men that have loved all things that are worth loving: and there must be young poets who will hear it and learn the secret from him, who will not bee too much afraid of giving themselves away to worship beauty in the accents of all its worshippers.

8I

THE ROOT OF POESY.

Times 1922

MR. HARDY'S MUSE.

IRONIC MELANCHOLY.

(By Maurice Hewlett.)

In the "Apology" prefixed to his latest volume Mr. Hardy, certainly the most reverred but one of our bards, complains of criticism—of some specifically, and of some, in more general terms—which in fact is hardly criticism at all, but rather an absence of warmth; not "glacial judgments," but a reception which has been respectful but unenthusiastic.

I suppose it would not be possible to set bounds to the tribute which a poet would receive, as his due, from the public if the recent Convention of Genoa had been held up while Mr. Lloyd George, assisted by interpreters, read aloud "Late Lyrics and Earlier" to the plenipotentiaries and united staff; or if the House of Commons had adjourned for a day to possess themselves (say) of some immortal work of my own, I don't know that either Mr. Hardy or I would have thought it anything out of the way. As Mr. Mathews's young man said to me upon a certain occasion, "They are like that."

But in soberness, and remembering that, as the tag has it, we can't all do everything, I don't know that, with all the will in the world, Mr. Hardy's could be described as an endearing Muse. Nearly all his poetry is elegiac—"The Dynasts" itself is full of elegy—and elegies, from the time of Gray at least, have been favourites with us. Wistful, repining, "pastoral melancholy," are what might be looked for from a nation at once serious and restrained, pious, and patient. But the stops of the various quills which Mr. Hardy has touched have not been tender.

BROODING DISILLUSION.

His melancholy could never be called a leucocholy. His elegy is frequently ironic, sometimes sardonic. He harps upon disillusion, has a crow to pluck with Fate. He is more concerned with the shock of new loss than with recollections of old happiness. He does not, indeed, allow us to feel sure that he has ever been happy, ever able to ignore the *amari aliquid* which may have been lurking for him. He has willingly—I do not at the moment say wilfully—courted the ghosts with which any sensitive man's world may be thronged. He has dwelt much in the past, not with satisfaction; and has allowed it to overshadow his present. The sun, in fact, is behind him, chiefly, as I think, because he has turned it his back.

In reading his poetry, strangely difficult, struggling, as it often is, with a reticence which is natural to him and a languor which must be temperamental, one cannot be sure whether he regrets so much as resents that which moves him to utterance. Out of the fullness of the heart the lyre should speak; but of what is Mr. Hardy's heart full? Or is it his heart, anyhow, which instructs his lyre? It is perhaps extraordinary, but I think it is his head, rather. If that be so, it is hopeless for him to expect a general response to his strains.

His best poems are narrative, truly observed, and truly felt. There's no doubt about the heart there. "The Trampwoman's Tragedy," "The Sunday Morning's Tragedy" are piercing ballads, and the former is much more than that—full of wild air, full of landscape, instinct with the ethos of the wanderers of our green roads. In such poems, and in certain generalized, plangent scenes in "The Dynasts," Mr. Hardy rises to the height of his power, which is the height of a great English poet. Few have attained such a height, still fewer have kept there long. Mr. Hardy has not; but while he is up he has all our homage.

REPELLENT FANTASIES.

It is when he allows himself to repine, to lament lost opportunity, to contrast what was with what is, apparently to their mutual disadvantage, that, as Dr. Johnson said of equally futile matter, "the attention naturally refires." And when, as it were, for mere wantonness, the poet yields to his curious research into the sometimes shocking confluence of things, the attention does not so much retire as sharply withdraw itself—as when the prospecting snail fetches up against a brick and flint wall.

Certain incongruities which he collected and called "Satires of Circumstance," he may rest assured, fairly puzzled the reader. In "The Collector Cleans his Picture" a figure emerges under his fingers, as he supposes, of "the rankest Venus," he kisses the fair similitude and goes on rubbing. Finally he discovers a hag, pointing with her finger

towards a bosom
Eaten away of a rat from the lusts
of a lifetime.

A grim morality, treated intellectually rather than emotionally. We

keep moving, becoming; even though [illegible] Witches of Endor is displacing the Darwinian theory and "the truth that shall make you free," men's minds appear to be moving backwards rather than on.' He excepts 'the minds of men in certain worthy but small bodies of various denominations,' and asks, 'What other purely English establishment than the Church, of sufficient dignity and footing, and with such strength of old association, such architectural skill, is left in this country to keep the shreds of morality together?' There is real religious feeling in not a few of the poems, especially in the two last pieces. But the value of the work lies in its vignettes of life. 'On one who lived and died where he was born' describes the man of eighty going up the stairs to end his days where he was born. The view of Keats at Lulworth Cove a century ago has its own pathos, and many of the ironies of life are powerfully brought out. The girl who married the fiddler for music at will and found that her husband never played at home is a quaint story, and 'The Little Old Table' creaks of the friend who gave it. Some of the songs have a music of their own, and no one ought to miss the tribute to the pet cat—'Last Words to a Dumb Friend.' 'The Old Neighbour and the New' are the new rector and his predecessor, 'who palely nods' to his old friend whilst the new-comer explains his plans for the parish. The poems are short, but that makes them the more vivid and attractive. It is a piece of work for which lovers of poetry and students of human nature will alike be grateful.

London Quarterly Review June 1922.

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[illegible] or

When moiling seems at cease
In the vague void of night-time,
And heaven's wide roomage stormless
Between the dusk and light-time
And fear at last is formless,
We call the allurement Peace.

Had any other man written "our annoys thereawhile" or referred to heaven's "roomage," we should have groaned; the force of Mr. Hardy's sincerity and vision makes one not merely accept them but like them. In the second passage he is so concentrated on his novel conception of that false tranquillity that disguises all our mortal struggle at certain hours that he scarcely seems to notice himself what words he uses; and we do not notice them either. But in many poems there is no flaw even on the second and more cold-blooded reading. "The Voice of the Past" (in Mrs. Head's book) is the type of poem as musical as any that exists, words married to tune, communicating an exquisite tenderness.

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It is the memory of that tenderness that remains with one; of a sensitive, generous heart which never ceases to feel. In all Mr. Hardy's work the dominant note is the note of Pity, not a pity based of commiseration superiority, but the pity of [illegible] knowingly embodied in flesh and born [illegible] all who sustain the inevitable misery of [illegible] transient life, and especially for those [illegible] circumstances, of character or of [illegible] rob of what fleeting happiness they [illegible] as he sees it, enjoy between mystery and [illegible] mystery. In his last poem he communes with himself, questioning his motives as [illegible] honest men must question their motives, disputing the value of his achievement as all men must do who have [illegible] the sense of eternity. The last verse runs:—

"*You taught not that which you set about.*"
Said my own voice talking to me;
"*That the greatest of things is charity*"
—And the sticks burnt low, and the fire went out,
And my voice ceased talking to me.

He will find, on this score, no other accuser than himself. It is from the very depths of that compassion that the poignancy of his pessimism—if he will allow the word—springs. He stands above the world and—

Wistful voices call
"We are fain! We are fain!" from everywhere
On Earth's bewildering ball.

Those voices are always in his ears, and their echoes are present in all his poetry. Had all of us, who call ourselves Christians, as much pity, and as much love, the ball might be a little less bewildering.

Mr. Hardy has been criticised in the way he suggests has been due, I think, not to his prevailing sadness or to his agnosticism, but to his habit of contemplating with too constant an eye the oddest pranks of Fate.

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That with all deference; to pursue it farther would be to court an error frequent in criticism of poetry: to forget the work in examination of the real or assumed doctrine. A doctrine, or conflicting doctrines, may underlie a poet's work; a doctrine may even occasionally be formulated in it; but no desire to argue or to disseminate a view of the universe was ever the prime motive of a poet when engaged in composition. Something, whether one of the innumerable natural images of truth, or a human relation, or an aspect of man's temporal life, or an "idea" about the Universe, has aroused an emotion, and from that emotion comes a poem. Mr. Hardy, almost always, has written like a poet; his work has come unpolluted from the spring, and he has let it come as it might. And so powerful has his emotion usually been that he has been able to write with a rare spontaneity. He is not without art, not without artifice; the variety of his metres and his stanzas is extraordinary. Yet, however complex his form, it seems to be born with the subject; and it is certain that his words gush out with such power that he can make things seem musical which no other man dare say, and incorporate in his melodies words which in any other poet's verses would sound cacophonous. You get lines like:—

As she blent that dexterous voice
With the ditty of her choice,
And banished our annoys
Thereawhile

[illegible] some [illegible] written under the temporary influence of a rationalist logic, can one call him a denier. His deepest desires might at any time have been deduced; in "The Oxen" and in certain passages of the new pieces, they are explicit; he would like to believe.

Some men have faith; many, very many, live in what Dr. Johnson called "that middle state between hypocrisy and conviction"; some find insufficient grounds for belief and hanker after it without getting it; some, so they assure us, see no purpose in the Universe, no hope of ultimate justice, no immortality in the soul, and are content to see none. Mr. Hardy was never amongst these last; there are moments when he has been a transient sojourner among the first. He has been rather a passionate sceptic than a pessimist. Yet, in a less general sense, there is some excuse for those who have given him the name. He himself refers to "good Panglossians," to whom his poems may seem "to embody strange and disrespectful conceptions of this best of all possible worlds"; I think that some who are hardly of the opinion of Dr. Pangloss might interpose that the world, however far from grace, does not deserve quite everything that Mr. Hardy has said of it. He does not slander human nature; that never. But he does, it might be urged, show a tendency to load the dice slightly in favour of malign Fate. I once heard a man say that "no husband in Hardy was ever safely dead"; they were always liable to reappear on the day of the second wedding. The joke was not unfair; Mr. Hardy does incline to favour the story not of normal, but of abnormal, ill-luck; he does show an astonishing ingenuity in constructing stories of misfortune, and especially of marital misfortune. There are several, startlingly summarised, in this volume of poems; as, for instance, "A Wife Comes Back." That he is preoccupied with the passage of time, with the relics of former days, with ghosts and tombstones, faded muslins, and old tunes, is nothing strange; the contemplation of transience and the regret of things gone is the mainspring of half our deepest emotions, and the source of half our poetry. Melancholy—in his poetry—is usually natural to a poet; doubt is [illegible] that

speak of the poems. It is a defence against the charge of pessimism and a meditation upon the state of poetry, and of the human mind, at this moment. Mr. Hardy writes prose as well as ever he did; as for poetry, it is of all his periods in this book. Half of it, he tells us, was written lately. Of the rest, some is older and some quite early. Of the last he says, "A freshness now unattainable seemed to make up for their inexperience and to justify their inclusion."

But what we notice in his verse, early or late, is the high level of his own peculiar accomplishment. There are failures, but they seem to be in the theme rather than in the execution; he has a taste, sometimes, for practical jokes of fate or chance, which are not interesting poetically because they *are* practical jokes, or would be if we could believe in a joker. They set a problem, but not an artistic one, since neither we nor Mr. Hardy can enjoy the cruel comedy of them. In them we see symptoms of a suppressed philosophy, which needs a vent other than verse.

But Mr. Hardy, like Wordsworth, is remarkable among poets for his choice of themes interesting in themselves, and for his power of heightening their interest by a treatment detached yet poetical. The weakness of the romantic movement was that it insisted on the interest and value of emotions in themselves. Mr. Hardy is in the great tradition, not of romantic poetry, but of poetry, in that he gives us the causes of emotion rather than his emotions, and by that means makes us share them. In him, in the very soul of his verse, you feel a shyness, almost an unwillingness of emotion, which causes him to avoid the obvious beauties of verse, instinctively rather than on any conscious æsthetic principle. He likes to write about an incident which has caused him to feel rather than about the feelings it has aroused; and his effort is to draw the incident in its essence and particularity. Through long, intense, and patient effort he is a master of such drawing; he can give the character of an incident, as Rembrandt can give the character of a person, in a few strokes of extreme precision and unforced emphasis, so that we have both the relish of fact and the beauty of art. He is not a Dutch painter in the little, prosaic sense, but always a poet, however homely the sound of his verse. But the best way to prove the point is to give an example, and so we quote the whole of one of the finest of his poems. It is called the "Whitewashed Wall."

Why does she turn in that shy soft way
Whenever she stirs the fire,
And kiss to the chimney-corner wall,
As if entranced to admire
Its whitewashed bareness more than the sight
Of a rose, in richest green?
I have known her long, but this raptured rite
I never before have seen.

Well, once when her son cast his shadow there,
A friend took a pencil and drew him
Upon that flame-lit wall. And the lines
Had a lifelike semblance to him.
And there long stayed his familiar look;
But one day, ere she knew,
The whitener came to cleanse the nook,
And covered the face from view.

"Yes," he said; "my brush goes on with a rush,
And the draught is buried under;
When you have to whiten old cots and brighten,
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A grim morality, treated intellectually rather than emotionally. We should be impressed; the heart should stand still for a moment—instead, the gorge rises. It is not grounded upon emotion. It is an intellectual fantasy. "The Woodfire" will offend many, and gratuitously. A man is burning on his hearth logs made of the Tree of Calvary, "with cuts and stains thereon." Mr. Hardy must allow me to say that he is too old for such gibes. Let him remember "Le Procurateur de Judée." If the thing must be done, that is how to do it. Nevertheless, I think that you shall as well scoff at a man's mother as at his religion.

"Sir Nameless" is a subject for Quarles, an apologue upon Mutability, and perfectly legitimate; but "The Chapel Organist" is spoiled by being stretched out beyond the limits of the probable into those of the absurd. Many women have sunk, some have deliberately dipped, into prostitution—but not in order to play the organ. Humour would have kept him from that tumble into bathos.

There are others of the sort, and I am sorry for them. If Mr. Hardy had felt them, he would have written some of them differently, and some he would not have written at all. But we may as well admit—what is indeed sufficiently obvious from his novels—that he can be as perverse as the best of us, and is perfectly incurable. Very well; but then he must not complain of "glacial judgments."

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3. 6. 22

MR. THOMAS HARDY DEFENDS HIMSELF

Late Lyrics and Earlier. By THOMAS HARDY. Macmillan. 7s. 6d.

Mr. Thomas Hardy, like many good authors, is impatient of criticism. He tells us in the prefatory "Apology" in *Late Lyrics and Earlier* that he once thought that "impotent or mischievous criticism" might be "a partial cause" of the evil condition into which literature has fallen. He now sees that the bad critics, even if they have the will, have not the power to strangle literature in its cradle. None the less, he denounces them and trounces them without mercy as men whose habit it is "to hearken for the key-creaks and be deaf to the diapason," and "to carry on the old game of sampling the poem or drama by quoting the worst line or worst passage only, in ignorance or not of Coleridge's proof that a versification of any length neither can be nor ought to be all poetry."

It is interesting that Mr. Hardy should have quoted Coleridge in this context, because Coleridge was in some respects rather like the sort of critic to whom Mr. Hardy objects. Turn to that unforgettable twenty-second chapter of *Biographia Literaria*, and you will find that Coleridge begins it with a consideration of "the characteristic defects of Wordsworth's poetry." He lays down the principle, it is true, that "to appreciate the defects of a great mind it is necessary to understand previously its characteristic excellences," but he hearkens for the "key-creaks" in Wordsworth's music with an attentiveness that Wordsworth, at least, found extremely inconsiderate. It was of this inspired criticism that Wordsworth told Crabb Robinson that "the praise he considered extravagant, and the censure inconsiderate. It had given him no pleasure." It is easy to understand Wordsworth's exasperation. Not all Coleridge's fault-findings were valid. Few readers nowadays will agree with him that in the poem, "I wandered lonely as a cloud," we "seem to sink most abruptly, not to say burlesquely, and almost in a medley" to the closing lines:

> And then my heart with pleasure fills,
> And dances with the daffodils.

Even so, critics, like poets, must be allowed their errors. And Coleridge with his characteristic defects stands as huge among critics as Wordsworth with his among poets.

It is not out of malice—at least, not always—that critics point out the defects of authors. It is part of their business to define the genius of authors, and how can they do this unless they make clear the limitations within which the genius of this or that writer expresses itself? Mr. Hardy, as a critic of life in general, defends his attitude by saying:

> If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst.

The critic of literature may fairly claim that from him, too, in his search for the Good, a "full look at the worst" is required. A critic of Wordsworth, for instance, even if he sets Wordsworth above all the other poets since Milton, cannot in honesty shut his eyes to the fact that Wordsworth was capable of beginning a poem, as he did in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*:

> A simple child, dear brother Jim,
> That lightly draws its breath
> And feels its life in every limb,
> What should it know of death?

To be aware that Wordsworth did not always write like a master is not to be unaware that he was a master. Good criticism is, from one point of view, simply a facing of the facts, good and bad. Men of genius have no need to be alarmed, for the balance of the facts is in their favour. How many critics have written about Mr. Hardy during the present century except on the understanding that he is a man of genius? Yet Mr. Hardy complains that he is one of the "roughly handled writers."

There are two points on which many of us who regard Mr. Hardy as an immortal writer feel bound to take note of his characteristic defects. We are not deaf to the diapason, but we have to admit that the key-creaks are at times so loud as to interfere with the music. In "At Moonrise and Onwards" we feel we are listening to a master playing on an imperfect instrument, so that he fails to produce the effect he wishes to produce, as in the last verse:

> No novelty are you,
> O Lady of all my time,
> Veering unbid into my view,
> Whether I near Death's mew,
> Or Life's top cyme!

Mr. Hardy often uses words in this way. He writes at times as though words to him were not jewels but fragments blasted from the rock of language. He gives us such a line as:

> But upping ghosts press achefully.

Here we see genius still struggling with words, and, in the course of the struggle, genius is not always able to rise from the ground.

The second point on which Mr. Hardy has been criticised—a criticism against which he vehemently protests in his preface—is his pessimistic outlook. He declares that he is not a pessimist but a meliorist. His critics and he use the word "pessimism," I think, in different senses. All that they mean is that he takes a more melancholy view of life than they do. He speaks scathingly of "good Panglossians," but it is no sin on the part of ordinary men to desire in poetry as in life a reasonable balance between sunshine and rainfall. The rainfall in Mr. Hardy's verse is excessive. The Easter poem in his new book is called "A Drizzling Easter Morning." Mr. Hardy has a perfect right to his view of life, but his critics have also a perfect right to raise the question whether the rain falls quite so often—whether the drizzle is quite so dense that the right people nearly always miss each other and the wrong people hardly ever do. Mr. Hardy for the most part sees human beings drifting about as if lost in a fog. "The Wedding Morning" is a poem characteristic of his prevailing mood, though not of his genius:

> Tabitha dressed for her wedding:—
> "Tabby, why look so sad?"
> "O, I feel a great gloominess spreading, spreading,
> Instead of supremely glad. . . .
>
> "I called on Carry last night,
> And he came whilst I was there,
> Not knowing I'd called. So I kept out of sight.
> And I heard what he said to her:
>
> "'—Ah, I'd far liefer marry
> *You*, dear, to-morrow!' he said.
> 'But that cannot be!'—O, I'd give him to Carry,
> And willingly see them wed,
>
> "But how can I do it when
> His baby will soon be born?
> After that I hope I may die. And then
> She can have him. I shall not mourn!"

Another poem, "In a London Flat," begins:

> "You look like a widower," she said
> Through the folding-doors with a laugh from the bed,
> As he sat by the fire in the outer room,
> Reading late on a night of gloom,
> And a cab-hack's wheeze, and the clap of its feet
> In its breathless pace on the smooth wet street,
> Were all that came to them now and then . . .
> "You really do!" she quizzed again.

A year later the wife's poor little joke has come true, and the husband

> Gazed, as if gazing on far faint shores,
> At the empty bed through the folding-doors
> As he remembered her words; and wept
> That she had forgotten them when she slept.

Mr. Hardy is convinced, beyond any other living writer, that malign spirits have a part in the weaving of our destinies. He is fascinated by the tragic sort of joke, as when he tells us how a husband brought home a "warping mirror" and how his wife, looking in it without knowing what it was, nearly fainted on seeing herself "a haggard crone." The fiddler's wife, too, is the sport of destiny with its tragic sense of fun:

> "O, I won't lead a homely life
> As father's Jack and mother's Jill,
> But I will be a fiddler's wife,
> With music mine at will!
> Just a little tune,
> Another one soon,
> As I merrily fling my fill!"
>
> And she became a fiddler's Dear
> And merry all the day she strove to be
> And he played and he played afar and near,
> But never at home played he
> Any little tune
> Or late or soon;
> And sunk and sad was she!

Even as we criticise Mr. Hardy, however, we feel that our criticism turns to praise. If he uses unmusical words, he uses them musically. If he is especially sensitive to the tragic irony of things, he writes of it with an artist's exultation. His pity is a passion, and his irony springs from it. He is a lover of life—of dance, of song, of love—and his poetry is the poetry of one of the sons of joy, though one who has bowed to sorrowful destiny:

> Even half-god power
> In spinning dooms
> Had I, this frozen sense should flower,
> And sand-swept plains and Arctic glooms
> Should green them gay with waving leaves,
> 'Mid which old friends and I would walk
> With weightless feet and magic talk
> Uncounted eves.

He writes with his face towards the light, as we see in his political poems, "Murmurs in the Gloom" and "And there was a Great Calm," with its beautiful last verse. And with what magnificent and masculine dignity he utters his apologia as an aged poet in "An Ancient to Ancients," in which with perfect wisdom and perfect irony he bids the new generation farewell and hail:

> And yet, though ours be failing frames,
> Gentlemen,
> So were some others' history names,
> Who trod their track light-limbed and fast
> As these youth, and not alien
> From enterprise, to their long last,
> Gentlemen. . . .
>
> And, ye, red-lipped and smooth-browed; list,
> Gentlemen;
> Much is there waits you we have missed;
> Much lore we leave you worth the knowing,
> Much, much has lain outside our ken:
> Nay, rush not: time serves: we are going,
> Gentlemen.

It is not a vain boast on the part of Mr. Hardy that he is one of those men of genius who "burnt brightlier towards their setting day." We may differ as to whether we like the work of the early Hardy or the middle-aged Hardy or the later Hardy best; but we cannot but be amazed by the rich harvest of verse that this man of genius has gone on producing right up to his eighty-third year.

ROBERT LYND.

THE LYRICS OF MR. THOMAS HARDY.*

This volume is a good deal more than a ok of verse, for it contains, as a prelude in se, an "Apology," excellently revealing . Hardy as an idealist in letters, just as the se shows an admirable singer. So that, wever eagerly one may wish to speak of the ms, one is constrained before anything else pay a tribute to those prefatory pages of ewd and kindly wisdom which have a ssage for these times; as, for sure, might xpected of one so rightly distinguished and noured as he is for his gifts of word and rt to Victorian and post-Victorian letters. it seems that shallowness has pricked. It asy to discover that all that is voluminous

* **Lyrics and Earlier. With Many Other Verses.** By Thomas Hardy (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.).

he two greatest survivors of the Victorian iod—which had its sublimities—is dis- tly a gain, and it may be hoped will drop ie few seeds of modesty and a truer sense alues into the minds of those to whom the ess of the paragraphs has generally come easily.

t is necessary to avoid the lure of a further ussion of ideals and principles as voiced he "Apology," as it would be manifestly urd to rate a bulky volume of verse as if it e making a prose appeal. Mr. Hardy gests that his earlier poems have freshness ch the later fruits of his invention do not ess. He has done himself an injustice e, for his later as well as his earlier pro- tions show an alertness and a spontaneity ch many a verse-maker, and not only he struggles under the inspiration of the night lamp, would be glad to own. His lack is technical felicity. The music does come daintily to the tap of his finger-tips, igh he has his phrases, as

> The sense of seamews' wings,
> And the shore's sibilant tune.

nas, however, that which vastly outweighs rely metrical deficiency—humanity. His is blessed with the feeling of pity, such as the great heart knows for butterflies of ence, human and otherwise, caught in the of a blind selfishness. He disclaims the "pessimist," and we agree in the dis- er without waiting to discuss what a mist may be. He is, anyhow, no optimist; possibly would be better suited without designation in particular, and be content main as are most of us, a complex com- tion of optimist and pessimist—as every- with faith in human kindness and not out knowledge of the brute forces which seem to control the world would be.

with all work reflecting personality, there eal of Mr. Hardy in these verses; indeed, nan on the whole is there more than the e. We know from his fiction, and from e Dynasts," that he has the gift of gentle cannot be perfect; but the little critics, as well as the portentous, in saying so, sometimes have cultivated a bad habit—"to scrutinize the tool-marks and be blind to the building, to hearken for the key-creaks and be deaf to the diapason, to judge the landscape by a nocturnal exploration with a flash lantern." In other words, to carry on the old game of sampling by quoting the worst passages. A naughty device! Well, we live in a hurried day, when selfishness and pushfulness and the other iniquities, which under present social conditions are rather worse than the seven deadly sins, take the wall of the better minded; and therefore must not be surprised to find ideals and the nobler hopefulness often some- what dim. Mr. Hardy's protest is useful. To have this gentle pronouncement urged by one laughter, as well as the irony, severity, and pity which could conceive Tess and carry her to her destiny; but in these lyrics and "other verses" the prevalent note is unquestionably the sadness of mortal life, sunlit and joyous for a little while, ending with the seeming futility of death. Again and again, many times, the poet moves with the dear shadows he has known in the earlier years, greeting again those, women and men, the loved and the unloved, who have joined the last drift to the darkness.

> So walked the dead and I together,
> The quick among.

Mr. Hardy has the gift of many years, lived at the centre of a wide horizon, together with powers of effective expression, and so can say in words what all must think who linger with the dear memories and do not want to forget them, even although it were happier not to remember.

The War, naturally, has marked the peculiar vein of melancholy—oh, not of pessimism—which is his own, and he makes some answer, characteristic—inasmuch as it touches the irony of the abounding folly of all such cataclysms. It was Armistice Day, "and there was a great calm":

> Henceforth no flying fires inflamed the gray,
> No hurtlings shook the dewdrop from the thorn,
> No moan perplexed the mute bird on the spray;
> Worn horses mused: "We are not whipped to-day";
> No weft-winged engines blurred the moon's thin horn.
>
> Calm fell. From Heaven distilled a clemency,
> There was peace on earth, and silence in the sky,
> Some could, some could not, shake off misery,
> The Sinister Spirit sneered, "It had to be!"
> And again the Spirit of Pity whispered, "Why?"

One has seen shadows of both those spirits in the musings of this man of great heart and soul, whose latest volume will be received with gladness and gratitude because it is impressed with those qualities which have marked his manifold works, and set a necessary example of care, uplift and inspiration.

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The Christian Life
18. 6. 22

THOMAS HARDY'S NEW POEMS

Late Lyrics and Earlier, with many other Verses. By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan. 7s. 6d. net.)

Mr. Hardy prefaces this new volume of poems with an Apology in the Greek sense—a defence of his art. He resents a little being called a pessimist. Like all artists he is sensitive about the misunderstanding of his art. He rightly insists that he must set down what he sees in life and the world. That is the only sure foundation of true art. But in the infinity of nature an artist has always to select what he counts most significant, and it is this selection which gives individuality to his work, which is the mark of his personality. And the peculiar bent of Mr. Hardy's mind leads him to select largely those incidents and aspects of life which suggest that life is melancholy, futile, broken, unsatisfying—that behind life is an ironic heartless power that plays with human souls. In *Tess* Mr. Hardy says definitely something like that, and in his poems his outlook on life often corresponds to this—he sees the sad, strange, horrible things often, and rarely the wholesome joyousness and happiness that is so large a part of actual life. That is why he has been called pessimist, though—as we have said before—there are indications now and then that he is not fundamentally pessimistic. That is made clear by this very interesting Apology. Particularly noteworthy is his emphasis on the close interrelation of poetry and religion—"often but different names for the same thing"—and his insistence that they "must like all other things keep moving, becoming." His sympathies are with the forward intellectual movement in the Churches, though he laments that it seems not so strong as the movement backward.

In this volume about half the verses have been written quite lately. The rest were set aside or overlooked when past volumes were published and the early poems are included because "a freshness in them, now unattainable, seemed to make up for this inexperience and to justify their inclusion." We are glad Mr. Hardy has put these poems in; the collection as a whole is remarkably varied and at times surprising. In not a few poems—the songs and others—there is a quite attractive sentimental vein; in many again we see Mr. Hardy's vivid, subtle—and at times weird—imagination playing over and illuminating things seen; and, as always, there are many poems that illustrate Mr. Hardy's tremendous sense of the dramatic elements, or possibilities, of life. If sometimes the rhymes and the rhythm give us a mental jolt, and some pieces might without much loss have been omitted, yet the selection as a whole bears witness to the high poetic genius of the writer. There are many poems from which it would be a pleasure to quote, and among our favourites are the first and the last two—the first, "Weathers," which begins:

> This is the weather the cuckoo likes,
> And so do I;
> When showers bestrew the chestnut spikes
> And nestlings fly:
> And the little brown nightingale bills his best,
> And they sit outside at "The Travellers' Rest,"
> And maids come forth sprig-muslin dressed,
> And citizens dream of the south and west,
> And so do I.

Again the penultimate poem, an early one, "After reading Psalms xxxix., xl., etc.," is made up of verses like this:

> Through my youth I stirred me not,
> High adventure missed I,
> Left the shining shrines unsought;
> Yet—me deferiat.

Profounder, more moving, is the final "Surview," in which the poet meditates on his past life.

accompanying cutting from Wkly. Westminster Gazette

June 24 1922

Rest of writing underneath. P.T.O.

REVIEWS.

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

Review by WALTER DE LA MARE.

"Later Lyrics and Earlier; with Many other Verses." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan.) 7s. 6d. net.

The criticism of poetry, both technical and comparative, as an art and as a science, in its relation to history and to the world at large, may be a study as delightful as it is instructive and useful.

None the less, for every reader of it there can be but one final and essential test of poetry, and that a personal one. All that immediately concerns him in a poem is the effect of its words, its music, its picturing on his mind; in what direction and to what end it transports the imagination; how it enlightens his life, enlarges his hospitality, enriches his memory, moves and solaces the heart. "Reasons" for its enjoyment may a little persuade; they cannot convince. Beauty can be justified only of her children. The proof of a poem is and must retmain in the reading.

There are degrees of intimacy, however. A poem may be as charming, and, at the same time, may remain almost as external a work of art as a Chinese ivory or a Chelsea Cupid. Its study may bring one as near to—and yet leave one as distant from—its maker as a flower. Mr. Hardy's work is at the other extreme. Since his life's work is a causeway in literature between mid-Victorian times and these days after the war, it is, of course, deeply interesting as a historical document. Its range and extent is distinct from its quality and originality, have placed him once and for all among the great English writers. He is, it is needless to say, an indefatigable craftsman. Every roughness, every twist and nodule of his verse is verse must have been as deliberate as was Herrick's final tap on a lyric with his goldsmith's hammer. Study of his technique, therefore, is of inexhaustible interest.

He is, too, impersonal in the sense that a large number of his poems, however subjective in appearance they may be, are dramatic. The views and convictions expressed in them are no more necessarily his own than Slender's, Bottom's, or Iago's were Shakespeare's. Again and again he has warned his critics of this—but not always successfully.

Even so, and apart from all this, the effect even of the most objective of his poems is that of a tale being told, of an experience being described, of a memory or secret being related, by a man whose face we can see, whose voice we can hear, whose ghostly presence is extraordinarily close to us. What happens in them is always of interest for its own sake; but the fascination of that interest is the accent, the impress, the bias of the recorder.

Because his poems are thus drenched with his personality, and bring us so profoundly into direct communion with himself, he can have few mere admirers. A tepid, an academic appreciation is impossible. Almost every poem is a shibboleth dividing the Yeas from the Nays. When, therefore, in the prefatory "Apology" to this new volume, reference is made to the "rough handling" of certain critics, the lover of

"The Spectator" 6.7.12.

Unloading the Goods

DID God will the war? Have we gained anything by it? Are we any better off than we were before we girded our swords upon our thighs and swore never to sheath them until—whatever we did swear? These questions which have caused so many sleepless nights to the statesman, the economist, the preacher, and the patriot, have been conclusively and affirmatively answered in a daily paper. They are answered by an anecdote—just one of these touching little episodes which did so much to brighten a war often drab and sometimes horrible—which is related by a lady who tells us that she is of good family, the widow of an army surgeon, and, therefore, a person whose word may be implicitly relied upon. Had it not been for such credentials we ourselves might have been inclined to doubt the entire truthfulness of the story. Unfortunately, owing to an execrable bit of sub-editing, it was relegated to an obscure part of the newspaper—to a column usually devoted to advertisements, and, consequently, although profusely illustrated, I fear it may have escaped the notice of many readers for whom it would have the keenest interest. I look to you, sir, to give it that wider publicity which it merits.

It appears that a gallant officer in the R.A.M.C. (who subsequently proves to be our authoress's own husband) saved the life of a Hindoo bombardier. How he did so we are not told; presumably by stanching a wound which would otherwise have proved mortal, for the picture shows an Oriental, pale beneath his tan, and quite clearly almost at his very last gasp. The grateful artilleryman then cast about in his mind as to how he might recompense his benevolent rescuer. A monetary reward was obviously out of the question, even if he had it on him, for what are mere pounds, shillings, and pence to human life? He might give him his house full of silver and gold and still remain his debtor. It then occurred to him (the Hindoo) that he was the possessor of a secret which many would give their all to learn. It is true it was a closely-guarded, religious secret, that his lips had been sealed as tightly as any mason's, that he had vowed by all that was sacred never to disclose what had been revealed only to him and his co-religionists; but he decided that where gratitude came into conflict with honour, then honour must go to the wall. Whether he was right in coming to this conclusion opens up a question far too wide to discuss in the space at our disposal; but those who cavil at his action should remember that he was weak from loss of blood, that he was carried away by a wholly admirable feeling of gratitude to the kindly physician, and that the guns were making a fearful din; he was, therefore, hardly in a fit state to decide upon a question of pure ethics. Be that as it may, the secret was imparted, and a boon hitherto known only to the Orient is now shared by the Occident, or, if it is not, it is the Occident's own fault. Nor are we left long in doubt as to the nature of the revelation. Our authoress does not seek to make capital out of our curiosity; she does not try to hold our waning attention by keeping us in suspense after the style of the second-rate sensational novelist. No; she tells us at once and without any unnecessary circumlocution that the secret he had to reveal was nothing more nor less than an infallible method of removing superfluous hair. He told how Hindoo women free themselves from unwanted hair, their religion forbidding them to grow hair on any part of the body except the head.

But, the sceptic may ask, would a young officer be sufficiently interested in any depilatory, however strongly recommended, to remember a receipt whispered into his ear amid bursting bombs and clashing steel? We have only to look at the picture to know that he

POETS AND POETRY.

MR. THOMAS HARDY AS A POET.*

MANY poets write "above their form," that is to say that the actual setting down in words is a process of addition, not of subtraction. Their thought gains by being set forth, but in every line of Mr. Hardy's poems we feel that here is an admirable brain expressing itself comparatively badly.

* *Late Lyrics and Earlier.* By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan and Co. [7s. 6d. net.]

It is said, and probably with truth, that had Mr. Hardy been born in the present age he would have been a poet, not a novelist. But when he began to write, poetry had for the moment ceased to be a living art; at the moment it provided no channel through which an artist could express himself. To suggest to a young man of letters that he should be a poet would have seemed absurd. One might as well have suggested to a rising athlete that he should take up archery. It was by means of fiction alone that a living, criticizing audience could be acquired. Yet it was not, so it is said, without a certain reluctance that Mr. Hardy did his main work in the medium of fiction. But Fate is inexorable, she presents us with a choice; he chose, and his reluctance hardly alters the fact that his verses are the verses of an amateur—I do not mean of a dilettante, but rather of a man who has something to say but has not conquered the resources of his medium.

Later Lyrics and Earlier are almost all more or less the raw materials of poetry; poems might be made of nearly all of them, but they have not been made. The verses remain for the most part direct statements of some emotion, and there is nothing in them beyond what you can see before you; no depth, no richness. But that was not because Mr. Hardy's mind had no depth and no richness, but that his technical resources were not sufficient to allow him to put depth and richness into a poem—a very different affair. He can really descend to extraordinary ineptitudes. There is a shocking poem about the Royal Academy, in whose stark simplicity the reader seeks in vain for a subtle meaning. The following—better than that on summer landscapes—is more or less typical:—

> "When a night in November
> Blew forth its bleared airs
> An infant descended
> His birth-chamber stairs
> For the very first time,
> At the still, midnight chime."

There are some good versified anecdotes, but so far as real poetry is concerned the following is as good as anything in the book:—

> "To my native place
> Bent upon returning,
> Bosom all day burning
> To be where my race
> Well were known, 'twas much with me
> There to dwell in amity.
>
> Folk had sought their beds,
> But I hailed: to view me
> Under the moon, out to me
> Several pushed their heads,
> And to each I told my name,
> Plans, and that therefrom I came.
>
> 'Did you? . . . Ah, 'tis true
> I once heard, back a long time,
> Here had spent his young time,
> Some such man as you . . .
> Good-night.' The casement closed again,
> And I was left in the frosty lane."

From whence we turn to the extremely witty and ironic apology with which the collection is prefaced. It holds many a nasty dig for Mr. Hardy's reviewers. I cannot quote from it, for the whole little essay hangs together so delightfully that an extract becomes theft. But the twelve pages of apology are, in my opinion, worth all the pages of verse added together.

A. WILLIAMS-ELLIS.

accompanying cutting from Wkly. Westminster Gazette

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MIDDLE SECTION

Is Mr. Hardy a Pessimist?

By J. M. Hone.

MR. HARDY'S preface to his last volume of poems, *Late Lyrics and Earlier*, was certain to produce controversy, notwithstanding Mr. Gosse's plea for silence on the subject. Mr. Gosse thought it a pity that Mr. Hardy should have taken notice of his detractors, and he pointed out very truly that there was no man whom young and old Britain had so united in praising. There might be a few imbeciles in opposition—who should bother about them? This is reasonable on the face of it: Mr. Hardy's admirers, led by the great ones of modern criticism, are quite entitled to be contemptuous of the obscure persons who are Mr. Hardy's (so-called) detractors. The controversy, however, takes on a more interesting aspect when it is discovered that what is complained of chiefly is that Mr. Hardy has been called a pessimist. "A Roman Catholic young writer" is guilty of an imbecile paradox in describing Mr. Hardy's ideas as "dark." In point of fact, the paradox would consist in calling Mr. Hardy's ideas "bright"; the only opening for imbecility in the matter is that which would lead to a condemnation of Mr. Hardy as a writer on the score of his gloom. Mr. Hardy has been called a pessimist, but no one (least of all the "Roman Catholic young writer") has argued that this disposes of his title to genius. Mr. Hardy shows himself, surely, to be out of touch with modern tendencies when, in his "Apology," he suggests that a writer's reputation is harmed when he gets the name of a pessimist. It was not so even in Victorian times. Gladstone, who was a representative Victorian, considered Leopardi to be the most terrible of pessimists and also one of the greatest poets of the world.

I know what was in the mind of the (so-called) Roman Catholic writer referred to, for I happen to be he; and certainly nothing was further from his intentions than to attack Mr. Hardy for pessimism. He did, however, feel a little pugnacious towards those (they include some of Mr. Hardy's admirers) who seem to regard pessimism, or malevolence towards human nature, as the hall-mark of literary greatness. Evidently they are no more its hall-mark than is optimism.

The question of fact is, however, worthy of consideration, although, whatever our decision may be, we will not allow our æsthetic judgment to be affected. Mr. Hardy himself supplies us with the necessary evidence in this very Apologia. Here is a definitive statement of his point of view:

> And looking down the future these few ("explorers of reality") hold fast to the same: that whether the human and kindred races survive till the exhaustion or destruction of the globe, pain to all upon it, tongued or dumb, shall be kept down to a minimum by loving-kindness, operating through scientific knowledge, and actuated by the modicum of free will conjecturally possessed by organic life when the mighty necessitating forces—unconscious or other—that have "the balancings of the clouds," happen to be in equilibrium, which may or may not be often.

Mr. Hardy calls this "evolutionary meliorism"; whatever its name, it is a gloomy thing. Perhaps before we are exhausted or destroyed we shall enjoy a little more of comfort and suffer a little less of pain—for those who like that sort of thing, that is the sort of thing they will like. It is certainly not metaphysical pessimism—the pessimism of Schopenhauer, or the pessimism that underlies many Eastern religions, and in some degree Christianity itself. The "Roman Catholic young writer" spoke of Mr. Hardy's "refusing consolation" (a phrase to which Mr. Hardy alludes); he meant that Mr. Hardy refused the (somewhat paradoxical) consolations which pessimistic religions and philosophies offer. Someone has written a book showing that Schopenhauer was really an optimist, because he found a sense in things, a goal or end to life, possible to be reached at least by a few. Evolutionary meliorism, as Mr. Hardy expresses it in the above passage, deprives things of all sense.

But perhaps the most interesting passage in Mr. Hardy's "Apology" is his explanation of certain of his poems (*e.g.*, *Royal Sponsors*), which, he says, "have been read as missfires because they raise the smile that they were intended to raise, the journalist, deaf to the sudden change of key, being unconscious that he is laughing with the author and not at him." Here, again, the criticism had been, not against Mr. Hardy, but against certain of his admirers, who praised poems like *Royal Sponsors* because of their "starkness" and candour, their "strength," etc. Now it appears that not only the "detractors," but also the enthusiasts, were "taken in"! However, I am not quite sure. Mr. Hardy describes the poems in question as "satirical and humorous." We must all have perceived the satirical and humorous intention, but were we right in believing that the satire and humour were intended to indicate a serious criticism of life? It was the criticism of life that seemed to some of us to be a missfire. Of course, if *Royal Sponsors* was pure fun, all of us have made fools of ourselves. *Royal Sponsors* is the story of a marquis and marchioness whose child is about to be christened under Royal auspices. Just as the "Royal Pair" arrive at the gate of the marquis's demesne the child dies. The marquis is equal to the situation; he exclaims: "If we cannot christen the child alive, by God! we shall have to christen him dead." That poems like this can be written out of the exuberance of the heart—and not as cynical comments on mankind or destiny—can easily be seen by reference to the *Ingoldsby Legends*. The *Knight and the Lady* in that volume is the tale of a young bride who loved her elderly aristocratic husband dearly; when, however, he is drowned while fishing for eels, she comforts herself quickly, not only by finding another husband, but *by enjoying the eels that had been found in the pockets of the deceased knight* (the latter is a very "strong" touch):

> And, ere morning came, that winsome dame
> Had made up her mind—or what's much the same
> Had *thought about*—once more "changing her name,"
> And she said with a pensive air
> To Thompson, the valet, while taking away,
> When supper was over, the cloth and the tray,
> "Eels many I've ate; but any
> So good ne'er tasted before!—
> They're a fish, too, of which I'm remarkably fond—
> Go—pop Sir Thomas again in the pond.
> Poor dear! He'll catch us some more."

The author of the *Ingoldsby Legends* was, I believe, a clergyman, and therefore could scarcely have been an evolutionary meliorist. But there is no reason why an evolutionary meliorist should not display exuberance on occasions—at moments when he is not contemplating his doctrine; nor is there any reason why he should not have a deep appreciation of the liturgical dignity of the English or other Churches, their old associations and spells, things which Mr. Hardy has expressed in many beautiful poems. Indeed, the more carefully the Apologia is read, the more difficult is it to discover any substance in Mr. Hardy's quarrel with his "detractors"—except that "their view of life is not his" (the phrase is Mr. Frederic Harrison's).

accompanying cutting from Wkly. Westminster Gazette

June 24 1922

Rest of writing underneath. P.T.O.

REVIEWS.

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.

Review by WALTER DE LA MARE.

"Later Lyrics and Earlier; with Many other Verses." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan.) 7s. 6d. net.

The criticism of poetry, both technical and comparative, as an art and as a science, in its relation to history and to the world at large, may be a study as delightful as it is instructive and useful.

None the less, for every reader of it there can be but one final and essential test of poetry, and that a personal one. All that immediately concerns him in a poem is the effect of its words, its music, its picturing on his mind; in what direction and to what end it transports the imagination; how it enlightens his life, enlarges his hospitality, enriches his memory, moves and solaces the heart. "Reasons" for its enjoyment may a little persuade; they cannot convince. Beauty can be justified only of her children. The proof of a poem is and must retmain in the reading.

There are degrees of intimacy, however. A poem may be as charming, and, at the same time, may remain almost as external a work of art as a Chinese ivory or a Chelsea Cupid. Its study may bring one as near to—and yet leave one as distant from—its maker as a flower. Mr. Hardy's work is at the other extreme. Since his life's work is a causeway in literature between mid-Victorian times and these days after the war, it is, of course, deeply interesting as a historical document. Its range and extent as distinct from its quality and originality, have placed him once and for all among the great English writers. He is, it is needless to say, an indefatigable craftsman. Every roughness, every twist and nodule of his verse—his verse must have been as deliberate as was Herrick's final tap on a lyric with his goldsmith's hammer. Study of his technique, therefore, is of inexhaustible interest.

He is, too, impersonal in the sense that a large number of his poems, however subjective in appearance they may be, are dramatic. The views and convictions expressed in them are no more necessarily his own than Slender's, Bottom's, or Iago's were Shakespeare's. Again and again he has warned his critics of this—but not always successfully.

Even so, and apart from all this, the effect even of the most objective of his poems is that of a tale being told, of an experience being described, of a memory or secret being related, by a man whose face we can see, whose voice we can hear, whose ghostly presence is extraordinarily close to us. What happens in them is always of interest for its own sake; but the fascination of that interest is the accent, the impress, the bias of the recorder.

Because his poems are thus drenched with his personality, and bring us so profoundly into direct communion with himself, he can have few mere admirers. A tepid, an academic appreciation is impossible. Almost every poem is a shibboleth dividing the Yeas from the Nays. When, therefore, in the prefatory "Apology" to this new volume, reference is made to the "rough handling" of certain critics, the lover of

Unloading the Goods

DID God will the war? Have we gained anything by it? Are we any better off than we were before we girded our swords upon our thighs and swore never to sheath them until—whatever we did swear? These questions which have caused so many sleepless nights to the statesman, the economist, the preacher, and the patriot, have been conclusively and affirmatively answered in a daily paper. They are answered by an anecdote—just one of these touching little episodes which did so much to brighten a war often drab and sometimes horrible—which is related by a lady who tells us that she is of good family, the widow of an army surgeon, and, therefore, a person whose word may be implicitly relied upon. Had it not been for such credentials we ourselves might have been inclined to doubt the entire truthfulness of the story. Unfortunately, owing to an execrable bit of sub-editing, it was relegated to an obscure part of the newspaper—to a column usually devoted to advertisements, and, consequently, although profusely illustrated, I fear it may have escaped the notice of many readers for whom it would have the keenest interest. I look to you, sir, to give it that wider publicity which it merits.

It appears that a gallant officer in the R.A.M.C. (who subsequently proves to be our authoress's own husband) saved the life of a Hindoo bombardier. How he did so we are not told; presumably by stanching a wound which would otherwise have proved mortal, for the picture shows an Oriental, pale beneath his tan, and quite clearly almost at his very last gasp. The grateful artilleryman then cast about in his mind as to how he might recompense his benevolent rescuer. A monetary reward was obviously out of the question, even if he had it on him, for what are mere pounds, shillings, and nim his house full of silver and gold and still remain his debtor. It then occurred to him (the Hindoo) that he was the possessor of a secret which many would give their all to learn. It is true it was a closely-guarded, religious secret, that his lips had been sealed as tightly as any mason's, that he had vowed by all that was sacred never to disclose what had been revealed only to him and his co-religionists; but he decided that where gratitude came into conflict with honour, then honour must go to the wall. Whether he was right in coming to this conclusion opens up a question far too wide to discuss in the space at our disposal; but those who cavil at his action should remember that he was weak from loss of blood, that he was carried away by a wholly admirable feeling of gratitude to the kindly physician, and that the guns were making a fearful din; he was, therefore, hardly in a fit state to decide upon a question of pure ethics. Be that as it may, the secret was imparted, and a boon hitherto known only to the Orient is now shared by the Occident, or, if it is not, it is the Occident's own fault. Nor are we left long in doubt as to the nature of the revelation. Our authoress does not seek to make capital out of our curiosity; she does not try to hold our waning attention by keeping us in suspense after the style of the second-rate sensational novelist. No; she tells us at once and without any unnecessary circumlocution that the secret he had to reveal was nothing more nor less than an infallible method of removing superfluous hair. He told how Hindoo women free themselves from unwanted hair, their religion forbidding them to grow hair on any part of the body except the head.

But, the sceptic may ask, would a young officer be sufficiently interested in any depilatory, however strongly recommended, to remember a receipt whispered into his ear amid bursting bombs and clashing steel? We have only to look at the picture to know that he

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"The Spectator" 8.7.22.

POETS AND POETRY.

MR. THOMAS HARDY AS A POET.*

MANY poets write "above their form," that is to say that the actual setting down in words is a process of addition, not of subtraction. Their thought gains by being set forth, but in every line of Mr. Hardy's poems we feel that here is an admirable brain expressing itself comparatively badly.

* *Late Lyrics and Earlier.* By Thomas Hardy. London: Macmillan and Co. [7s. 6d. net.]

It is said, and probably with truth, that had Mr. Hardy been born in the present age he would have been a poet, not a novelist. But when he began to write, poetry had for the moment ceased to be a living art; at the moment it provided no channel through which an artist could express himself. To suggest to a young man of letters that he should be a poet would have seemed absurd. One might as well have suggested to a rising athlete that he should take up archery. It was by means of fiction alone that a living, criticizing audience could be acquired. Yet it was not, so it is said, without a certain reluctance that Mr. Hardy did his main work in the medium of fiction. But Fate is inexorable, she presents us with a choice; he chose, and his reluctance hardly alters the fact that his verses are the verses of an amateur—I do not mean of a dilettante, but rather of a man who has something to say but has not conquered the resources of his medium.

Later Lyrics and Earlier are almost all more or less the raw materials of poetry; poems might be made of nearly all of them, but they have not been made. The verses remain for the most part direct statements of some emotion, and there is nothing in them beyond what you can see before you; no depth, no richness. But that was not because Mr. Hardy's mind had no depth and no richness, but that his technical resources were not sufficient to allow him to put depth and richness into a poem—a very different affair. He can really descend to extraordinary ineptitudes. There is a shocking poem about the Royal Academy, in whose stark simplicity the reader seeks in vain for a subtle meaning. The following—better than that on summer landscapes—is more or less typical:—

"When a night in November
Blew forth its bleared airs
An infant descended
His birth-chamber stairs
For the very first time,
At the still, midnight chime."

There are some good versified anecdotes, but so far as real poetry is concerned the following is as good as anything in the book:—

"To my native place
Bent upon returning,
Bosom all day burning
To be where my race
Well were known, 'twas much with me
There to dwell in amity.

Folk had sought their beds,
But I hailed: to view me
Under the moon, out to me
Several pushed their heads,
And to each I told my name,
Plans, and that therefrom I came.

'Did you? . . . Ah, 'tis true
I once heard, back a long time,
Here had spent his young time,
Some such man as you . . .
Good-night.' The casement closed again,
And I was left in the frosty lane."

From whence we turn to the extremely witty and ironic apology with which the collection is prefaced. It holds many a nasty dig for Mr. Hardy's reviewers. I cannot quote from it, for the whole little essay hangs together so delightfully that an extract becomes theft. But the twelve pages of apology are, in my opinion, worth all the pages of verse added together.

A. WILLIAMS-ELLIS.

MR. HARDY'S NEW POEMS.*

The Bookman July 1922

By Laurence Binyon.

THE "late lyrics" in this volume form about half of the contents, and show that with Mr. Hardy at any rate the poet's fire does not "get faint and low" with advancing years. The rest of the pieces are poems left over from preceding collections, or overlooked and newly found.

One of the impressions strongly remaining after reading these pages is the deep affection for the art of music that constantly finds direct or indirect expression. It is not a vague "panting for the music which is divine," nor the abstract enthusiasm of the concert haunter, so much as a natural love, deepened and engrained by long associations, for music itself and perhaps still more for all that music represents in the traditional life of the countryside—the life-sweetening moments, the gay release from labour—mingled with affectionate memories of the musicians themselves, young and old; memories of dance-tunes and those who played them and those who danced to them; of village choirs and bell-ringers; an affection flowing out even to the well-worn instruments themselves, lending them each life and personality. We are reminded of scenes in the Wessex novels like the opening chapters of "Under the Greenwood Tree," and remember the vein of true artist feeling and understanding that shows itself unconsciously and delightfully in certain of the homely-natured villagers.

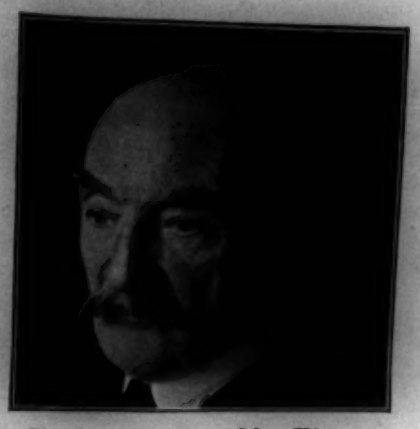

Photo by E. O. Hoppé. **Mr. Thomas Hardy.**

Most poets apparently have little comprehension or appreciation of music. Swinburne, it is said, did not know "God Save the Queen" when he heard it. Browning was an exception; but though capable of very musical verse, he cannot be called a melodious poet. Nor is Mr. Hardy a melodious poet, though he too, it is obvious, could write delightful melody if he chose. Indeed he does sometimes so choose. Witness some of the songs in this book. Here is one:

"If grief come early
Joy comes late,
If joy come early
Grief will wait;
Aye, my dear and tender!

"Wise ones joy them early
While the cheeks are red,
Banish grief till surly
Time has dulled their dread.

"And joy being ours
Ere youth has flown,
The later hours
May find us gone;
Aye, my dear and tender!"

But the theme needs to be simple—a jet of emotion—for the melody to come unchecked. If a poet aims at verbal melody he must reckon to sacrifice weight and precision of meaning to a certain degree. And two qualities of Mr. Hardy's gift prevent his speech from obeying more than occasionally the pure singing impulse. One of these is the activity of his thought, his ever-present consciousness of the problems of existence; the other is his passion for what in a painter would be called good drawing; his structural definition, his scrupulous aversion from easy smoothness, from vagueness and from merely emotional or decorative colour. Perhaps the novelist's pursuit of close detail in description has strengthened a natural bent; and though even in prose Mr. Hardy's descriptions are essentially poetic, with their constant awareness of the invisible energies at work behind motionless surfaces, still we feel that as a poet he shows a defect when he rejects or fails to find the word which, by sound rather than sense, is emotionally significant and therefore right. His verse but rarely carries a bloom on it. He coins words, or invents new uses for words, as boldly as Shakespeare; but he has not (who has?) Shakespeare's uncanny felicity.

Whether deliberately or no, Mr. Hardy seems to have founded his lyric art on those forms of song which the genius of a people discovers by instinct for itself; simple forms which yet, as we know from many an anonymous song and ballad that has come down to us, imply a fundamental sense of beauty and expressive power. Economised narrative; dramatic speech; varied repetition of a lilting refrain; the compressed intensity we find in "The Twa Corbies" and "Edward, Edward" or "Clerk Saunders"—these are Mr. Hardy's chosen aims and chosen modes. But into the forms and manners of old tradition he imparts the colour of his peculiar imagination and all the curiosity of a modern, probing mind. He varies the measures too; always tending, it would seem, to prefer the technically more difficult metre, as if he courted resistance in his material and delighted in an obstacle ingeniously overcome. Still, the fundamental plan of his lyrics is that of folk-song and ballad; hence a definiteness of outline and a solidity for which in these days we are grateful.

The ironies of circumstance still have their old fascination for Mr. Hardy, not only as the thoughtful spectator of life, but as the dramatic artist intent on the crucial situation when the souls of men and women are shown naked. A master of compressed narrative, he varies here on familiar themes. But he wins us more with other pieces, such as "The Whitewashed Wall":

"Why does she turn in that shy, soft way
Whenever she stirs the fire,
And kiss to the chimney-corner wall
As if entranced to admire
Its whitewashed bareness? . . ."

(Cont. on back)

* "Late Lyrics and Earlier: With many other verses." By Thomas Hardy. 7s. 6d. (Macmillan.)

London Mercury POETRY July 1922

LATE LYRICS AND EARLIER, WITH MANY OTHER VERSES. By Thomas Hardy. Macmillan. 7*s.* 6*d.*

THE SHEPHERD AND OTHER POEMS. By Edmund Blunden. Cobden-Sanderson. 6*s.*

ACCIDENT has brought these books together: but one is a suitable pendant to the other, and it is a pleasure to fancy that the older poet may find in the work of the younger that loving intimacy with the English thing that has been one of his own dominant characteristics.

It is impossible to begin Mr. Hardy's book without a reference to his age. He is over eighty, and it would be impossible to produce from the whole annals of English literature a second book of this importance by a man of this age. Some of the poems in it are old, but many are quite recent; and the mere preface is evidence of an astonishing vitality in its author. This preface is in part controversial: Mr. Hardy takes exception to critics who have accused him of pessimism. He has merely, he says, faced facts instead of following Dr. Pangloss. The argument need not be carried on here; the bent of Mr. Hardy's mind—a complex mind over which at one time a sombre rationalist doctrine held sway, his heart remaining obstinate—is worth study; but it may suffice here to attend only to his poetry, which was never written to expound anything, though it may incidentally do so. That poetry would in itself be sufficient in quality and quantity to give Mr. Hardy high rank amongst our immortals had he never written a line of prose; one may even say had he never written what many hold to be the greatest of his works, *The Dynasts*. In his magnificent poem *An Ancient to Ancients* he says:

Sophocles, Plato, Socrates,
Gentlemen,
Pythagoras, Thucydides,
Herodotus and Homer—yea,
Clement, Augustine, Origen,
Burnt brightlier towards their setting day,
Gentlemen.

He is conscious, clearly, of his own splendid sunset. The lyrics he writes at eighty are better than those which he wrote at sixty. They are unique in kind, also. Mr.

Contemporary Review.
September 1922.

MR. THOMAS HARDY'S APOLOGIA.*

Much of Mr. Hardy's new volume of poems is recent work, and he rest is made up of gleanings from quite early work and from oems held over from recent volumes in order to bring those olumes within the limits of size that the poet had designed. Mr. ardy rightly feels, even in "neo-Georgian days," that his old udience will not have departed, and that even "a less friendly ass" will find "little or nothing in technic or teaching that can considered a Star-Chamber matter, or so much as agitating to ladies' school." In his Apology he makes one very significant atement. His so-called "pessimism" has often been the subject comment, but here he tells the historian of literature, in final swer, that his "pessimism" is really an aspect of the "obstinate estionings" and "blank misgivings," the disallowance of nich "tends to a paralysed intellectual stalement"; his "pessiism" is "in truth only such 'questionings' in the exploration reality, and is the first step towards the soul's betterment, and e body's also." The poet adds that there are some who feel

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his is very characteristic, and it is followed by some not unkindly omment on his critics before the poet turns to "the precarious rospects of English verse at the present day." Mr. Hardy eclares (with much reason) that "we seem threatened with a new ark Age." He does not speculate on the truism that it is the arkest hour that precedes the dawn. Nor does he trouble to conder the fact that barren periods seem always to precede periods f great literary significance; but he thinks it possible that the ge may be drawing back *pour mieux sauter*, "drawing back r a spring." Meantime, he appeals for the rallying of the forces f goodness in a destroyed generation, and asks:—

> "What other timely English establishment than the Church, of sufficient dignity and footing, and with such strength of old association, such architectural spell, is left in the country to keep the shreds of morality together?"

is interesting that a trumpet-call to the Church in a dark age ould have come from Mr. Hardy. He might have called upon e old Universities or the old public schools; but he prefers to ll upon the power that begot them. We do not doubt that the inking forces in the Church will hear the call.

The poems are melancholy enough, the sound of bells at even, t they are true poetry, true pictures, full of deep thoughts:—

> "—It is an evening tune;
> One not designed to waste the noon,
> You say. I know: time bids me go—
> For day-tide passes too, too soon."

he poem on the Armistice is just what so many have felt about e great day when the guns stopped, but it is a sad poem. All e poems, almost all, are sad, even the exquisite "If it's ever ring again," but it is a balanced sadness, a facing of "quesonings," not a hopeless sadness. Yet Mr. Hardy himself, ough he easily slays the conventional optimist, would, we elieve, think that the deep-founded optimism of Mr. Browning is etter for the race than a sadness and doubtfulness which seems to rape the beauteous landscape of the world that the poet loves ith the mists of evening, unlit by any flash of sunset or of moonse. Mr. Browning and Mr. Hardy are great, perhaps the great, gures of a great literary age. They represent two sides of the oble Victorian period. Around them are ranged two armies, each qually noble in ideals, no doubt, but one inspired by a sure and ertain hope and the other burdened not so much by doubt as by ars as to the ultimate justice of things. Mr. Hardy's apology rows new light on his real views, but Mr. Browning's unconquerble hope is more helpful to struggling men and women.

County Life 17. 2. 23.

MR. THOMAS HARDY'S right hand has not forgotten its cunning. Only absolute genius could have chosen the Ilford murderers for a theme and written of it with such understanding, even sympathy, and yet condemnation. Ballad-makers and other poets of antiquity might have composed a few deathless lines upon the subject, but they would have ignored what the modern poet frankly recognised, namely, that there was behind the face of that "fair and capable one" something "drumming, drumming." He turns in the true Hardy way to destiny, the "Causer," to ask why, if it made her "good in the germ, it sent a worm to madden its handiwork." Finally comes the comment that the Causer implanted the Clytemnestra spirit in her:

> Sowed a tare
> In a garden fair
> And a thing of symmetry to the view
> Brought to derision.

The *London Mercury* is to be congratulated on its privilege of publishing this uplifting of what to the ordinary mind is a low and vulgar tragedy to a region of universal philosophy, where pity does not take the shape of excusing crime, but of grieving that there was "a worm i' the bud" that brought beauty to shame and disaster.

Review of Reviews
March 1923.

THE LONDON MERCURY.

Most readers will turn at once to Thomas Hardy's poem on the "Portrait of a Woman about to be Hanged." Of course the stanzas are strong; they are also more finished than is usual with Hardy, but the philosophy is the familiar one. To him evil is not so much a mystery, a problem, as the wilful malice of Mr. Hardy's god. This god has caused the personable woman, planned the fair garden, and then sowed a tare. And somehow the woman gets the credit of her good looks, her garden comeliness, and the god gets all the discredit of the tare. So that the real Ilford criminal must be Mr. Hardy's god, who has "done in" all three. And if the woman had been ugly would not Mr. Hardy have found new gall in which to dip his peerless arrows?

pages is the deep affection for the art of music that constantly finds direct or indirect expression. It is not a vague "panting for the music which is divine," nor the abstract enthusiasm of the concert haunter, so much as a natural love, deepened and engrained by long associations, for music itself and perhaps still more for all that music represents in the traditional life of the countryside—the life-sweetening moments, the gay release from labour—mingled with affectionate memories of the musicians themselves, young and old; memories of dance-tunes and those who played them and those who danced to them; of village choirs and bell-ringers; an affection flowing out even to the well-worn instruments themselves, lending them each life and personality. We are reminded of scenes in the Wessex novels like the opening chapters of "Under the Greenwood Tree," and remember the vein of true artist feeling and understanding that shows itself unconsciously and delightfully in certain of the homely-natured villagers.

Photo by E. O. Hoppé. **Mr. Thomas Hardy.**

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* "Late Lyrics and Earlier: With many other verses." By Thomas Hardy. 7s. 6d. (Macmillan.)

at verbal melody he must reckon to sacrifice ... and precision of meaning to a certain degree. And two qualities of Mr. Hardy's gift prevent his speech from obeying more than occasionally the pure singing impulse. One of these is the activity of his thought, his ever-present consciousness of the problems of existence; the other is his passion for what in a painter would be called good drawing; his structural definition, his scrupulous aversion from easy smoothness, from vagueness and from merely emotional or decorative colour. Perhaps the novelist's pursuit of close detail in description has strengthened a natural bent; and though even in prose Mr. Hardy's descriptions are essentially poetic, with their constant awareness of the invisible energies at work behind motionless surfaces, still we feel that as a poet he shows a defect when he rejects or fails to find the word which, by sound rather than sense, is emotionally significant and therefore right. His verse but rarely carries a bloom on it. He coins words, or invents new uses for words, as boldly as Shakespeare; but he has not (who has?) Shakespeare's uncanny felicity.

Whether deliberately or no, Mr. Hardy seems to have founded his lyric art on those forms of song which the genius of a people discovers by instinct for itself; simple forms which yet, as we know from many an anonymous song and ballad that has come down to us, imply a fundamental sense of beauty and expressive power. Economised narrative; dramatic speech; varied repetition of a lilting refrain; the compressed intensity we find in "The Twa Corbies" and "Edward, Edward" or "Clerk Saunders"—these are Mr. Hardy's chosen aims and chosen modes. But into the forms and manners of old tradition he imparts the colour of his peculiar imagination and all the curiosity of a modern, probing mind. He varies the measures too; always tending, it would seem, to prefer the technically more difficult metre, as if he courted resistance in his material and delighted in an obstacle ingeniously overcome. Still, the fundamental plan of his lyrics is that of folk-song and ballad; hence a definiteness of outline and a solidity for which in these days we are grateful.

The ironies of circumstance still have their old fascination for Mr. Hardy, not only as the thoughtful spectator of life, but as the dramatic artist intent on the crucial situation when the souls of men and women are shown naked. A master of compressed narrative, he varies here on familiar themes. But he wins us more with other pieces, such as "The Whitewashed Wall":

"Why does she turn in that shy, soft way
Whenever she stirs the fire,
And kiss to the chimney-corner wall
As if entranced to admire
Its whitewashed bareness? . . ."

London Mercury — POETRY — July 1922

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County Life 17. 2. 23.

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Ruins of Ruins
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A friend had once outlined the shadow of her son's head on the wall, thrown by the firelight, and the silhouette had a "lifelike semblance." Then the whitewasher came and whitewashed the wall and covered the face from view:

"But she knows he's there. And when she yearns
For him, deep in the labouring night,
She sees him as close at hand, and turns
To him under his sheet of white."

Who but Hardy could have written that, with its tender unexpectedness? (Must we also add, with the forced accents of its metre?) Or the "Fallow Deer at the Lonely House":

"One without looks in to-night
Through the curtain-chink
From the sheet of glistening white;
One without looks in to-night
As we sit and think
By the fender-brink.

"We do not discern those eyes
Watching in the snow;
Lit by lamps of rosy dyes
We do not discern those eyes
Wondering, aglow,
Four-footed, tiptoe."

I wish I had more space to quote, especially the beautiful poem which closes the book—"Surview." But this, I doubt not, will soon be familiar to all lovers of poetry.

The volume is prefaced by an "Apology," which is mainly a repudiation of the author's alleged "pessimism," and goes on to suggest that we are threatened with a new Dark Age, owing to "the barbarising of taste necessity of religion "unless the world is to perish," and a "forlorn hope" of its alliance with complete rationality. Here is plenty of matter for discussion, but I have little space left. Mr. Hardy contends that "pessimism" misnames what are only "obstinate questionings" in face of the mysteries of the universe; and he quotes an old line of his own:

"If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst."

Pessimism is truly a word of sloven usage nowadays; and all honest thinkers are liable to incur the charge. But I think Mr. Hardy may forget that he has sometimes seemed to assume a positive malice in the Unseen Power; it is things like the concluding sentence of "Tess" which stick in the mind, and give some excuse to the criticisms he complains of. Nevertheless he is right; no true pessimist would still be singing at eighty, with a glorious record of creativeness behind him. And after all it is not by a writer's expressed philosophy of life that we judge him; it is by the contact with his spirit and all that this means in the enriching of our own lives. And we think of the men and women that people the Wessex novels, and remember how, entwined with the energy that created them, is a deep, if never obtruded, faith in human courage and human goodness.

Mr. Hardy speaks, not without some bitterness, of the rough handling he has had from critics, and has some justly trenchant words on the tendency of average criticism to "scrutinise the tool-marks and be blind to the building." But he must know that, if late in finding full appreciation, his work has won the victory over all the stupidity of detraction, though he does not

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The Nation and Athenaeum
7. 7. 23

MR. HARDY AND THE PLEATED SKIRT

By ROBERT GRAVES.

One of the poems of earlier reference in the Diamond Jubilee collection of Mr. Hardy's "Lyrical, Narratory, and Reflective Poetry"* immortalizes a winsome young girl wearing a pleated skirt. Pleated skirts, which went out of fashion for a great number of years, came back quite recently, still characteristically pleated, but altogether different in cut and shorter in length by very many inches. Let the pleated skirt point this moral—that though the old forms unexpectedly return to give a certain approval to the idea of history repeating itself, these revivals are only revivals in outline; there is nothing old under the sun. If Mr. Hardy's earlier poetry is enjoyed now, this enjoyment is not of the original impact, but of the ricochet; and, if Mr. Hardy's poetry was for many years neglected by his contemporaries, let it not be set down to their shame; when in 1866 Mr. Hardy found the world a welter of crass casuality, and the gods a group of purblind Doomsters, that conclusion was unfavourable to the optimistic expansion of the Victorian Age. Similarly, when industrial development was being hopefully applied to agriculture, when the steam-plough, the thresher-and-binder, and the Scottish farm-factor were looked to as heralds of a golden age of rural prosperity, the folk-lore of the wooden plough and the wooden spade and the jog-trot, unaffected rhythms of the backward West-country muse could not be expected to please. Since 1866 everything has changed: national faith in industrialism has waned long ago, and it is to the folk-element in Mr. Hardy's verses that the disillusioned Georgian makes his or her escape, a tendency confirmed by the great modern revival throughout England, both in city parks and on village greens, of morris dancing and the singing of the very songs which occur in snatches throughout the "Wessex Novels."

There is, of course, a corresponding change in Mr. Hardy; in his later work the folk-element has become, we will not say self-conscious; but the home-spun and hand-made, offered once in defiance of the machine-made, are now complaisant to the romantic interest taken in them by the victims of industrial progress. Moreover, though Mr. Hardy had been a sceptic for fifty years, as he says in "On a Midsummer Eve," apparently written in 1916:—

"I lipped rough rhymes of chance, not choice,
I thought not what my words might be,"

latterly

"There came into my ear a voice
That turned a tenderer verse for me."

Further, he rebukes himself in "Surview," the last poem of the hundreds in this collection:—

"*You held not to whatsoever was true,*
Said my own voice, talking to me.
Whatsoever was just you were slack to see,
Kept not things lovely and pure in view,
Said my own voice, talking to me,"

where evidently the "tenderer verse" is the conclusion

"*That the greatest of things is Charity,*"

and the poet finishes content "if the sticks burn low, the fire go out, and his voice cease talking to him," for his scepticism need no longer trouble him in the light of this discovery. Yet Mr. Hardy should know that when his heart was "in its arrogancy," in late Victorian days, this "Surview" attitude was neither necessary nor possible. Moreover, Mr. Hardy's inability to hold to whatsoever was true in the religious sense, because he was baffled by the cries and counter-cries of a confused age, is the very quality that has raised him and Mr. A. E. Housman to the thrones of popularity from which the more confident Browning and Tennyson have lately been deposed. These previous poets, who could accept Darwinism and its implications, and so be preferred to poets who lived before the dawn of Higher Criticism (see Mr. Hardy's "A Respectable Burgher on the Higher Criticism"), were at any rate able to believe with Kant in an absolute moral law to be assumed even where lost sight of, and they could find its nearest practical illustration in the contemporary movements of Victorian progress and uplift. But as in philosophy M. Bergson asked questions which Kant, being dead, could not answer, and the pragmatists went on asking equally disconcerting questions, so in poetry there was a concurrent development of the pragmatic view that Caprice rules the world; and it is this view which Mr. Hardy has put gently, with certain important reservations, and which Mr. Housman has made a cry of almost unrelieved despair.

The scepticism of Hardy is best illustrated by a comparison with Mr. Housman's. Mr. Hardy once was defending himself to me against certain phantom accusers who charged him with pessimism: he said that he had been through his latest volume and had marked in the index the pessimistic, the optimistic, and the neutral poems, and found to his satisfaction that the two former categories paired off fairly closely. Mr. Housman could not make that claim for his "Shropshire Lad," as he admits in "Terence, this is stupid stuff"; nor do "Last Poems" recant a word of the sentiment "Heaven and Earth ail from their prime foundations"; but for Mr. Hardy all along, whatever may be wrong with Heaven, Earth is honest and wholesome. For Mr. Housman, even in days of apparent peace over the countryside, the ancient struggle of forces personified as Celt and Saxon rages unabated—

"They cease not fighting, East and West,
On the marches of my breast"—

while for Mr. Hardy, even in the time of Jeremiah's prophesied "Breaking of Nations," there is comfort in the sight of

"Only a man harrowing clods
In a slow, silent walk,
With an old horse that stumbles and nods,
Half-asleep as they stalk."

The Shropshire Lad spends his Sunday mornings cynically lying with his lass on Bredon Hill with an insult for the matin's bell; Mr. Hardy's Wessex lad

P.T.O.

* "Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy." Thin-Paper Edition. (Macmillan. 8s. 6d.)

... is not one that I can afford to part with.

"Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy." India Paper Edition. London; Macmillan, 8s. 6d. net.

The Guardian
3. 8. 23.

...MS OF THOMAS...

...ppreciation by J. Middleton Mu...

Some few of them, I know just as well as ever I knew, are poetic failures. The dozen "Satires of Circumstance" convince me hardly more now than when I read them first. But these things do not matter, for I am no longer concerned with the beauty and achievement of each single poem. It is to the spirit of a great man that I come to submit myself and to pay homage; I take up the "Collected Poems" now in order that I may approach a hero of humanity.

I am spellbound. Binding the earliest of the poems to the last, I am aware of an imperishable thread of predestination. No matter how casual its occasion, each several poem has its place in the structure of enduring poetry which Hardy has built to be the everlasting mansion of his spirit. In no one of them can I find the faintest trace of the sneer or the lie; instead, everything is knit together by that spiritual honesty which alone can withstand the assault of time. And I rejoice to think that I was alive while many of these poems were being written, and I realize more keenly how precious was my privilege to have seen and spoken with the man who wrote them.

The Courage of a Pessimist

Only a few years ago it was the fashion to call Hardy "pessimistic." By now the fashion has passed, but the prejudice remains. Hardy (they say) is depressing; he is not inspiriting. Certainly he is not, in his poems any more than in his novels, the man to give courage or delight to those who can derive it only from the specious promise of the happy ending. But courage of that sort is unworthy of a man either to take or to give. The courage worth having—in life and in the arts, as on the battlefield—is the courage which comes to those who have felt the fear and conquered it. This is the courage which Hardy has, and which he kindles in ourselves. In reading his poetry we begin to realize once more that the highest virtue to which man can attain is to be true to his own experience: "nothing extenuate, nor aught set down in malice." This is the highest and most exacting of all loyalties, for it is a loyalty not to a person but to mankind. No glamour of friendship hangs about it; it is attended by no thrill of ecstatic sacrifice; it is simple in itself, and infinitely hard to achieve. But when we discern it in a man's writing we respond to it, if we care for high things at all, as to no other victory of the spirit of man. It is a challenge and a trumpet call to our forgotten nobilities.

To some chosen spirits—and these alone can attain to it—this loyalty presents itself in the guise of a loyalty to their own secret selves. In them the familiar words of Shakespeare,

To thine own self be true,
And it shall follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man,

have their deepest meaning and finest application. By being loyal to themselves these chosen ones are loyal to all men; by being true to themselves they achieve a truth that is universal. Hardy is one of them, and because he is, his work has the monumental unit in variety which is the certain mark of immortality. Once we have come to *know* Hardy's work, to

hav... tra... qua... to... his... wh... cov... his... ver...

...onal Truth," a brief discussion of ... in our perception of ... goodness. ... a little inclined to apolo... "truth" in this ... no apology is needed. For ... is what ails philosophy in ... its modern disguises. It no ... a way of life arising out of a ... of all human experience. It ... problems and flogs them to ... adherents even pride ... setting aside the moral, ... religious experience, ... selves for the sacred ... to which we reply that a ... a flag of that colour is ... He is a pirate of ... a specialist or a dabbler, who ... ambition and mis... timidity for the scien... mind. Should Mr. Reid, as ... pen again, we shall ... for a wider development of ... so cautiously handled in the ... pages of his book.

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The Scottish Nation 25. 9. 23.

Hardy and "The Dynasts"*

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A. R. WILLIAMS.

*"The Dynasts," by Thomas Hardy. Thin paper edition. 8/6 net. (London: Macmillan.)

THE POEMS OF THOMAS

An Appreciation by J. Middleton Mu

IT seems to me that a month never passes without my taking down Thomas Hardy's poems to hunt for one which I vaguely remember. A mood rises out of the darkness within me; there is a sudden brushing-by of the wings of a thought which returns whence it came; a regret, a foreboding, a sweetness takes hold of me, and this mood of mine, different for all its abiding sameness as the surface of a pond in changing lights and airs, is echoed, mirrored back, reverberated by some half-remembered poem of Hardy's. I take down the book and search till I find it.

Then something more than a mere reverberation of my mood is vouchsafed; its essence is revealed to me. What might have seemed transitory is manifest as part of the substance—if not of things, of that which lies beyond and shines through them. I know, then, that it is no personal pain from which I seek release when I turn (as I turn again and again) to the "Poems of 1912—1913," that wistful and heart-devouring record of a visit to the scene of a long lost love:

Ignorant of what there is flitting here to see,
The waked birds preen and the seals flop lazily.
Soon you will have, dear, to vanish from me,
For the stars close their shutters and the dawn whitens hazily.
Trust me, I mind not, though life lowers
The bringing me here. Nay, bring me here again!
I am just the same as when
Our days were a joy, and our paths through flowers.

That, it seems to me, is life. Life, that is, as felt by a great spirit, seen by a brave vision; accepted and comprehended and mastered. There is no sadness any more, but only beauty and truth. This is what life is, if only we have the eyes to see, the souls to feel, the minds to know the limitations and the miracle of mortality. It is one more guarantee vouchsafed to us, to be added to the thousands with which the greatest artists have enriched humanity, that by its power to look calamity in the face and to subdue it the human spirit touches the comfort of the mysterious reality which must elude the coward and the liar for ever.

A Brave Tonic

Scarcely a month ever passes but I turn, guided by some dim recollection, to some poem of Hardy's for a twofold assurance; that that which I feel has been felt by one greater and braver than I, and that this feeling, truly obeyed and truly expressed, is authenticated as part of some eternal truth of things by the beauty which descends upon it. In so far as it can do this, poetry is great. Hardy's poetry does this, and it is great poetry.

Then, at long intervals, comes the moment when opportunity and desire coincide, and I can settle myself to the three days' task of reading all Hardy's poems steadily through. As the years go on I am held more and more deeply spellbound by their procession. There was a time when I would gladly have seen fifty of them taken out of the book, now there is not one that I can afford to part with. Some few of them, I know just as well as ever I knew, are poetic failures. The dozen "Satires of Circumstance" convince me hardly more now than when I read them first. But these things do not matter, for I am no longer concerned with the beauty and achievement of each single poem. It is to the spirit of a great man that I come to submit myself and to pay homage; I take up the "Collected Poems" now in order that I may approach a hero of humanity.

I am spellbound. Binding the earliest of the poems to the last, I am aware of an imperishable thread of predestination. No matter how casual its occasion, each several poem has its place in the structure of enduring poetry which Hardy has built to be the everlasting mansion of his spirit. In no one of them can I find the faintest trace of the sneer or the lie; instead, everything is knit together by that spiritual honesty which alone can withstand the assault of time. And I rejoice to think that I was alive while many of these poems were being written, and I realize more keenly how precious was my privilege to have seen and spoken with the man who wrote them.

The Courage of a Pessimist

Only a few years ago it was the fashion to call Hardy "pessimistic." By now the fashion has passed, but the prejudice remains. Hardy (they say) is depressing; he is not inspiriting. Certainly he is not, in his poems any more than in his novels, the man to give courage or delight to those who can derive it only from the specious promise of the happy ending. But courage of that sort is unworthy of a man either to take or to give. The courage worth having—in life and in the arts, as on the battlefield—is the courage which comes to those who have felt the fear and conquered it. This is the courage which Hardy has, and which he kindles in ourselves. In reading his poetry we begin to realize once more that the highest virtue to which man can attain is to be true to his own experience: "nothing extenuate, nor aught set down in malice." This is the highest and most exacting of all loyalties, for it is a loyalty not to a person but to mankind. No glamour of friendship hangs about it; it is attended by no thrill of ecstatic sacrifice; it is simple in itself, and infinitely hard to achieve. But when we discern it in a man's writing we respond to it, if we care for high things at all, as to no other victory of the spirit of man. It is a challenge and a trumpet call to our forgotten nobilities.

To some chosen spirits—and these alone can attain to it—this loyalty presents itself in the guise of a loyalty to their own secret selves. In them the familiar words of Shakespeare,

To thine own self be true,
And it shall follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man,

have their deepest meaning and finest application. By being loyal to themselves these chosen ones are loyal to all men; by being true to themselves they achieve a truth that is universal. Hardy is one of them, and because he is, his work has the monumental unit in variety which is the certain mark of immortality. Once we have come to *know* Hardy's work, to

"Collected Poems of Thomas Hardy." India Paper Edition. London; Macmillan, 8s. 6d. net.

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hristmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.
"Now they are all on their knees,"
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By the embers in hearthside ease.

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They dwelt in their strawy pen,
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In these years! Yet I feel
someone said on Christmas Eve,
"Come and see the oxen kneel.

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Since, then, no grace I find
Taught me of trees,
Turn I back to my kind
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There now and then are found
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propositional Truth," a brief discussion of truth as it appears in our perception of beauty and goodness.

Mr. Reid is a little inclined to apologise for mentioning "truth" in this context, but no apology is needed. For this, surely, is what ails philosophy in most of its modern disguises. It no longer seeks a way of life arising out of a valuation of all human experience. It isolates problems and flogs them to death. Its professed adherents even pride themselves on setting aside the moral, the æsthetic and the religious experience, as they prepare themselves for the sacred quest of truth. To which we reply that a man who hoists a flag of that colour is no philosopher at all. He is a pirate of some kind, a specialist or a dabbler, who renounces his proper ambition and mistakes intellectual timidity for the scientific habit of mind. Should Mr. Reid, as we hope, take up his pen again, we shall look to him for a wider development of the theme so cautiously handled in the concluding pages of his book.

SOME GARDENING BOOKS.

DWARF AND SLOW GROWING CONIFERS. By MURRAY HORNIBROOK. Country Life. 10s. 6d.

THE FERNS (FILICALES). Vol. I. By F. O. BOWER, Sc.D. Cambridge University Press. 30s.

ONE GARDEN. By D. H. M. READ. Williams and Norgate. 12s. 6d.

THE GLORY OF THE GARDEN. By M. G. KENNEDY-BELL. Black. 5s.

GARDEN CONSTRUCTION. By J. GEOFFREY W. HENSLOW, M.A., F.R.H.S. Odhams Press. 15s.

DELPHINIUMS, AND HOW TO EXCEL WITH THEM. By A. J. MACSELF. Country Life. 9d.

The last few months have seen the publication of a number of gardening books of various kinds, including several whose value will be lasting. Mr. Murray Hornibrook's volume will undoubtedly long remain the standard, as it is the only work on *Dwarf and Slow Growing Conifers*. To many people "dwarf fir tree" suggests merely one of those little pot-grown dwarf trees which come from Japan and are sold largely by drapers. They do not realise that there is a whole race of dwarf fir trees of European origin. There is all the difference in the world between them. A Japanese dwarf tree is, in almost all cases, a normal tree artificially stunted. It is grown in a pot, and given just enough soil and sustenance to enable it to make its annual crop of leaves and no more. If taken from its pot and planted out in open soil it will set to work and very soon grow into a full-sized normal tree. The European dwarf conifers, on the other hand, [illegible]

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The Guardian
3.8.23.

THOMAS HARDY, POET.

BY R. ELLIS ROBERTS.

One of the most difficult and most entrancing of the problems of æsthetic is the reaction of the artist to his material, or the inter-relations of the art and the craft. There can be no doubt that the greatest artists have always waited on their material. There have been artists who have produced immortal and exquisite work within the limits of very narrow formulæ; but, at its greatest, art so produced is lacking in the freshness, the intensity and vitality of the work of men who are prepared to adventure where their material leads them. This readiness to adventure, to experiment, and dare new forms is one of the secrets of the supremacy of Michael Angelo, of Shakespeare, of Rembrandt. Work produced by men with this freedom of choice will always more readily give us the sensation of escape, make us aware that behind the plain meaning, behind the symbolic meaning, of a work of art, there lies a deeper meaning yet, unknown very likely to the artist himself. So the Moses of Michael Angelo, so Falstaff and Hamlet, so Don Quixote and Mr. Pickwick become universal figures, characters in eternity.

* * *

There is a poor reaction to material. Swinburne, who created a new music in English verse, became deafened by it; and, losing all sense of anything else but the pleasure in its reverberations, he repeated himself, became little more than a man humming a threadbare tune. Swinburne was too susceptible to the beauty of his rhythm, and was quite abnormally insensitive to human character and truth. He is a tragic instance of a man who was intoxicated by unapplied ideas. His work is sterile, and even at its best arouses enthusiasm more by the consummate execution than by its creative power. In looking at the new collected edition of Mr. Hardy's poems and the enlarged reprint of Lionel Johnson's essay*, I have been once more astonished at the extraordinary power which has given us so much great prose and great poetry; and I find in Mr. Hardy an excellent example of the artist who, crammed with ideas, possessed by the liveliest interest in his fellow-men, is still sensitive to the claims and the opportunities of his craft. It might be argued that Mr. Hardy returned to the writing of poetry, was driven back by the sheer power of unborn rhythms. After the stupid reception of that fine and sombre book, *Jude the Obscure*, we may presume, I think, that the author turned to the composing of that great book, *The Dynasts*. (Is it yet realised, I wonder, that in *The Dynasts* English literature has a book as great as Tolstoy's *War and Peace*?) Although most of *The Dynasts* is in blank verse, and some in prose, it contains lyrics which have the reserved beauty, beauty of rain on granite moors, which only Mr. Hardy can achieve. I like to think that, as he wrote those, he aroused somewhere in the world of words an insistent demand from the unmade poems to be made, to become shaped and shown. Here was no danger of Swinburnian repetition. Some may find Mr. Hardy too inclined to dwell on things uncomfortable, or, in his own words, to seek truth "by the exploration of reality"; but no one can say that he dwells only on the pessimistic side of life, nor that he fails, in his outlook, to cover a huge variety of character and circumstance. If he takes us to the churchyard a little often, it is not only to remark on the indubitable fact of our mortality; it is to point out how different fortunes are covered by those similar stones. Mr. Hardy takes us to the churchyard much in the same mood as some one might who has lived long in a village he loves; he finds history there and truth and pathos and a grim humour. But how ridiculous is the opinion that he never goes elsewhere. As I turn over these seven hundred pages I am struck again by t
great range of Mr. Hardy's interest, a
by his variety of temper. It is too oft
forgotten that he has written one of t
most beautiful Christmas poems sin
the Middle Ages; that he is a master
the narrative in rhyme; and that in
certain kind of concentrated, passionat
dramatic lyric he has no rival but h
master Browning. Could this, f
instance, be equalled by any other livin
poet, this lyric which mixes in som
strange way the tones of Christin
Rossetti and of Robert Browning into
music entirely and triumphantly indivi
dual?—

You did not come,
And marching Time drew on, and wore me numb
Yet less for loss of your dear presence there
Than that I thus found lacking in your make
That high compassion which can overbear
Reluctance for pure loving kindness' sake
Grieved I, when, as the hope-hour stroked its sum,
You did not come.

You love not me,
And love alone can lend you loyalty;
I know and knew it. But, unto the store
Of human deeds divine in all but name,
Was it not worth a little hour or more
To add yet this: Once you, a woman, came
To soothe a time-torn man; even though it be
You love not me?

* * *

A great deal of sad nonsense has been written about Mr. Hardy's philosophy. In the preface to his last book he resents and rebuts the charge of pessimism "under which word, expressed with condemnatory emphasis, it is regarded by many as some pernicious new thing (though so old as to underlie the Gospel scheme, and even to permeate the Greek drama); and the subject is charitably left to decent silence, as if further comment were needless." One of the grave disadvantages of a centralised government and culture is that Londoners (either by birth or adoption) are apt to set the tune in most matters of importance. They run our wars, make our peace, and visit the country for a rest or a holiday, when they admire the mullions, and the gables, and the thatch, and go back to London again. Unfortunately most critics are Londoners. It can only have been Mr. Chesterton's London outlook on life which made him capable of that shallow and too often quoted gibe at Mr. Hardy's philosophy; for Mr. Hardy's philosophy is, really, just the ordinary outlook of a countryman, farmer or peasant. You *do* meet farmers who are invariably cheerful about crops and pay about the weather—but they are generally bankrupt. If Nature is not your monthly holiday, but your continual creditor, the very circumstance and stuff of your livelihood, and you dwell in England, you are certain to be an advocate of what the London critics call pessimism, and Mr. Hardy calls "evolutionary meliorism." I do not think the claim that his philosophy underlies the Gospel scheme is at all extravagant. I have sometimes wondered whether any modern men who are also thinkers really believe in hell except Dr. Gore, Mr. Thomas Hardy, and Baron von Hügel. It would be ridiculous and impertinent to say that Mr. Hardy was a believer; but you can hold the Christian philosophy to be probable and still remain agnostic. Mr. Hardy knows well enough a truth which again most modern men forget, that to be a practising Christian you need faith. He never confuses Christianity with some mild uprush of sentiment and morals, served with maple-sugar. And of all infidel poets—if he will permit me to use a good, old-fashioned word which only prejudice turned into a name of insult and invective—who has written with more hopefulness and with more charity, especially in his rare poems on Christian subjects? Is there a better modern religious poem than "The Oxen"?—

Christmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.
"Now they are all on their knees,"
An elder said as we sat in a flock
By the embers in hearthside ease.

We pictured the meek, mild creatures where
They dwelt in their strawy pen,
Nor did it occur to one of us there
To doubt they were kneeling then.

So fair a fancy few would weave
In these years! Yet, I feel,
If someone said on Christmas Eve,
"Come, see the oxen kneel,

In the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
I should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

* COLLECTED POEMS. By THOMAS HARDY. Macmillan. 8s. 6d.
ART OF THOMAS HARDY. By LIONEL JOHNSON. Lane. 8s. 6d.

HARDY*

urry

e the knowledge which enables to
ce through the thing created the
ility of the creating spirit, we begin
feel that there is not in the range of
poetry one poem in which he is not
olly present. All that we could dis-
er in the most comprehensive study of
work, we re-discover in the tiniest
se. So, for example, "The Oxen":

hristmas Eve, and twelve of the clock.
"Now they are all on their knees,"
n elder said, as we sat in a flock
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the lonely barton by yonder coomb
Our childhood used to know,"
should go with him in the gloom,
Hoping it might be so.

nd here, too, if we try to define the
ity which irradiates this poem, we
l perhaps find no better or exacter
l than loyalty—loyalty to human
vledge, to human disillusion and to
an hope. And these are not three
lties, but one.

is significant that in the song in
e Woodlanders," wherein Hardy
s back from the cold comfort of
re to the life of men, he should have
keyword on his lips:

Since, then, no grace I find
Taught me of trees,
Turn I back to my kind
Worthy as these. . . .
There now and then are found
Life-loyalties.

Emphasis on Loyalty

e such life-loyalty is the inspiration
e first poem I have quoted. Hardy
perhaps with ever more truth than
new, that he turns back to his own
In this essential matter, as in so
others more external, Hardy
es hands with Shakespeare. It has
een sufficiently pointed out (perhaps
se it has not been sufficiently under-
) that in the dark period of his
dies Shakespeare's way of escape
ne and one alone. More and more
me to put the emphasis on loyalty.
gh the whole universe is black—
coverably dark, total eclipse"—the
of human loyalty shines the more
tly in the surrounding darkness,
by the devotion of Kent and
lia in *King Lear*, and by the
b pageant of loyalties (of Eros, of
rbus, of Antony, of Cleopatra, of
nian) in *Antony and Cleopatra*, the
rse is lit as by a blaze of triumphant
lour. Less magnificently, but not
surely, Hardy turns to the same
compelled by the same inward
ity. Like turns to like; the loyal
alty. In the same way as Shake-
, against a like challenge of
ir, Hardy vindicates the soul of
And that, in the last resort, is the
why he is beloved and revered as
glish writer has been since Dickens.

propositional Truth," a brief discussion of truth as it appears in our perception of beauty and goodness.

Mr. Reid is a little inclined to apologise for mentioning "truth" in this context, but no apology is needed. For this, surely, is what ails philosophy in most of its modern disguises. It no longer seeks a way of life arising out of a valuation of all human experience. It isolates problems and flogs them to death. Its professed adherents even pride themselves on setting aside the moral, the æsthetic and the religious experience, as they prepare themselves for the sacred quest of truth. To which we reply that a man who hoists a flag of that colour is no philosopher at all. He is a pirate of some kind, a specialist or a dabbler, who renounces his proper ambition and mistakes intellectual timidity for the scientific habit of mind. Should Mr. Reid, as we hope, take up his pen again, we shall look to him for a wider development of the theme so cautiously handled in the concluding pages of his book.

SOME GARDENING BOOKS.

DWARF AND SLOW GROWING CONIFERS. By MURRAY HORNIBROOK. Country Life. 10s. 6d.

THE FERNS (FILICALES). Vol. I. By F. O. BOWER, Sc.D. Cambridge University Press. 30s.

ONE GARDEN. By D. H. M. READ. Williams and Norgate. 12s. 6d.

THE GLORY OF THE GARDEN. By M. G. KENNEDY-BELL. Black. 5s.

GARDEN CONSTRUCTION. By J. GEOFFREY W. HENSLOW, M.A., F.R.H.S. Odhams Press. 15s.

DELPHINIUMS, AND HOW TO EXCEL WITH THEM. By A. J. MACSELF. Country Life. 9d.

The last few months have seen the publication of a number of gardening books of various kinds, including several whose value will be lasting. Mr. Murray Hornibrook's volume will undoubtedly long remain the standard, as it is the only work on *Dwarf and Slow Growing Conifers*. To many people "dwarf fir tree" suggests merely one of those little pot-grown dwarf trees which come from Japan and are sold largely by drapers. They do not realise that there is a whole race of dwarf fir trees of European origin. There is all the difference in the world between them. A Japanese dwarf tree is, in almost all cases, a normal tree artificially stunted. It is grown in a pot, and given just enough soil and sustenance to enable it to make its annual crop of leaves and no more. If taken from its pot and planted out in open soil it will set to work and very soon grow into a full-sized normal tree. The European dwarf conifers, on the other hand, like bantam chickens, really are dwarfs. It is their nature.

The origin of these European pigmy trees is interesting. They occur chiefly in two ways—as seedlings or as

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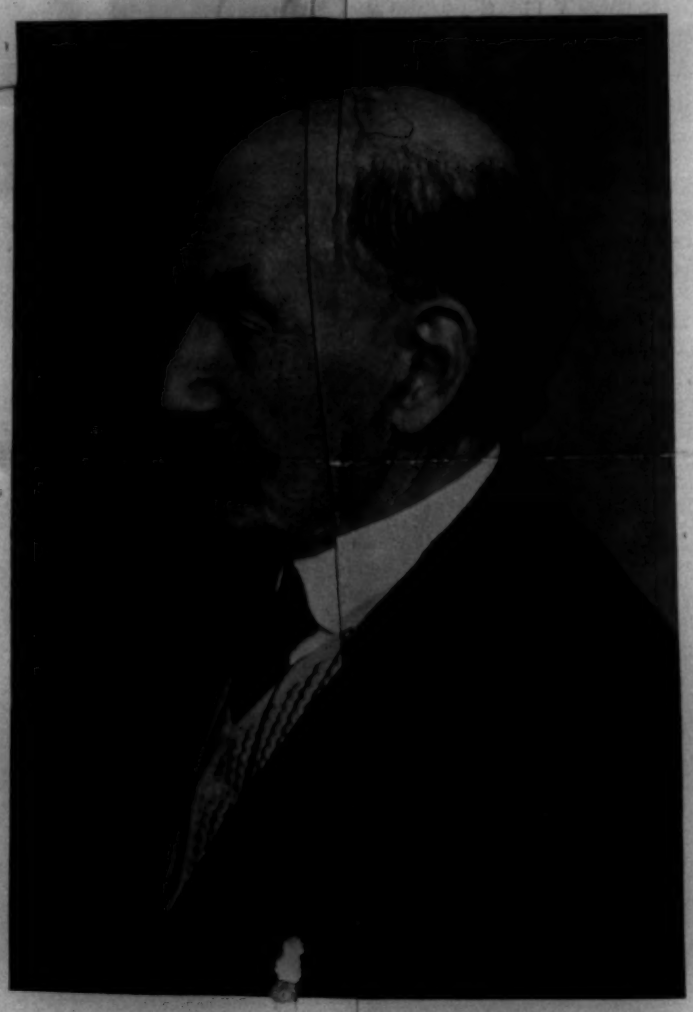
HUMAN AND HAL-HUMAN SHOWS.

By John Freeman.

A STUPID, if excusable, irrelevance has crept into many references to Mr. Thomas Hardy's new volume, "Human Shows, etc."* That a poet should still be a poet at eighty-five is reckoned wonderful, but it would, in truth, be much more wonderful if Mr. Hardy were no longer Mr. Hardy, but merely a blithe and hasty rhymer. On the contrary, he is more obstinately himself than ever, more resolute in conformity to the Hardy convention than ever, more securely self-expressive than ever. He does not owe his attitude to time but to character; all that we have to thank time for is the opportunity—the boon—of confirming our impressions from the newly repeated illustrations. In the three hundred pages of "Human Shows" there are three hundred hammer-taps, driving each a little deeper our old sense of his poetry and of his cynical, subdued enjoyment of life. Our "veteran" poet is not a veteran at all; he has a resilient humour, the gaiety of a music-loving nature, and above all that peculiar eagerness of youth, the eagerness for whatever is grim, abnormal, unfortunate and spectacular. That is to say, his view of man's place and activities is strongly dramatic and completely detached; he stands far enough distant to see the human antics as sharp and small, and looks coolly enough to note the contortions even while he is speculating tranquilly upon their inevitability. The fondness of guileless natures for evil problems, the preoccupation of earnest agile minds with dark and terrible things, has been noted by commentators upon Shelley; and it is to be remarked as plainly in Mr. Hardy. A worm on a hook—Mr. Hardy uses man as though he loved him, but uses him firmly all the while. If worms could groan he would wring a rough, new music from their groans; if worms could talk, he would record their dialogue in sardonic reflections upon anglers; if worms could weep, he would give you the very echo of their sobs in a sinuous repetition. This indeed is what he has done: men have groaned, talked, sobbed, aspired, fallen, faded—and he uses them gently, as though he loved them, letting not a single breath escape, and chuckling—surely it is a chuckle?—at the predicament in which man's fatal nature, or the fatal nature of the universe, has plunged them.



Camera portrait by E. O. Hoppé.

Mr. Thomas Hardy.

It is the sense of this that makes the new volume intensely interesting and, at first, intensely chilling. That the most popular living poet should be the most depressing is wellnigh incredible, until we remember how serious is the body of English poetry, and how heavily it is burdened with our national melancholy. Mr. Hardy's poetry, in fact, is gloomy enough to be popular, for it deepens our spiritual despondency and shows more clearly than anything else the watery humour remarked by alien observers. It is only when we begin to reflect, or to rebel, that the melancholy is dissipated, like coiled smoke shifted by a wind. Death, caprice, and above all his favourite god coincidence—of these he makes his queer, mournful episodes, to match our sallow mood, and scarcely needs the snowstorm of several of his pieces to achieve his full mortal effect. Cold, cold! He could not write with such consistent devotion of cruel and disastrous events if he did not love the writing, and when the reader discovers this for himself he too will burst into laughter as he comes

* "Human Shows, Far Phantasies, Songs and Trifles." By Thomas Hardy. 7s. 6d. (Macmillan.)

7s. 6d.

The Dial

English Review
4 Deans Yard, Westminster, S.W.1.
Cutting from issue dated May 1924

"The Dynasts" *

A Psychological Interpretation

By Agnes Stewart

We are now familiar with the idea that man's actions may spring from motives which are not immediately present in consciousness, but are buried so far in the unconscious that they can only be revealed by a special mechanism. Studies of nervous disease have shown that highly sensitive natures are frequently unable to adapt themselves to their environment—sometimes owing to arrested development through severe mental shock, sometimes owing to repression and wrong training in early life, and these nervous subjects take refuge from reality in phantasies and day-dreaming. Richard II. as conceived by Shakespeare is a convincing example of a character, placed in circumstances which are too strong for him, taking refuge from reality in the brilliant conceits of an uncurbed imagination. At the most critical moments of his life Richard is found paralysing his power for action by phantasy-weaving. To the brain specialist of to-day this would indicate the repression of unpleasant facts or difficulties into the unconscious, causing what is known as a split in the personality. This condition can be remedied by making the subject conscious of the conflict between instinct and reason, which is at the root of his problem in adaptation. He must do battle with his inertia and release his buried interest if he would reintegrate his personality and restore poise: otherwise he may mistake the fantastic for the real and pass into the ranks of the insane.

Such a struggle as is here indicated in the evolution of individuals is paralleled on a larger scale in the evolution of continents—in world evolution, and in *The Dynasts* Hardy has lifted ten years out of history and placed them

* *The Dynasts.* By Thomas Hardy.

determine, wisely, that this shall not matter to our enjoyment: and we think we succeed. And yet, turning to Hardy, I become

man. It was wr
James Stephen de
in his *Ecclesiastic*

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l and Publishing Offices: St. Paul House

N AND HAL-

By John R

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Thomas Hardy's new
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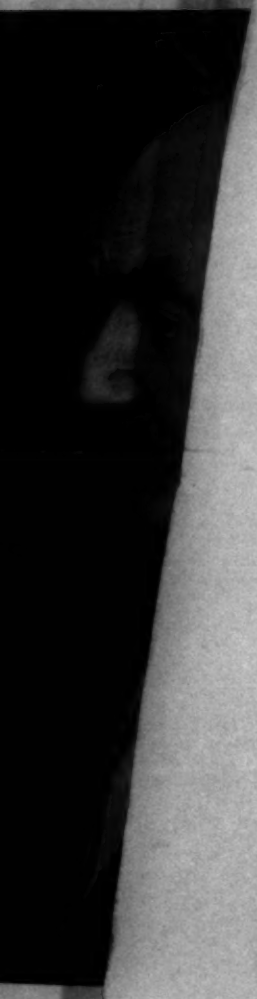

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Songs and Trifles."
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for himself he too will burst into laug

THE DOME AND THE CRANE

Holding on to the frail iron rails he watched helplessly as the hooks tore two great rents in the sides of the dome far below him, and as one of the hooks, coming away suddenly, caught the Ball and Cross full on with a terrific impact and sent it flying.

He stood there shaking and trembling, his face like a piece of paper, his eyes like blots of ink on the paper.

Someone was coming up his ladder! What was that they were shouting? What? Eh? Pandemonium! Everyone was shouting! What had he done? Destroyed the most beautiful thing in all London! *He!* George Hunnybun of all men! They must not catch him! No!

He gaped desperately over the rail into the dizzy depths below. He raised one leg—then sprang, caught the toe of his boot, twisted himself round in the air . . . parted from the rail—fell. . . . Down, down, down. . . . Ough!

Figures ran in all directions and surrounded him.

If only that poor thing that had been George Hunnybun could have known that, when he seemed only to have made that hideous destruction, he had indeed done the most constructive deed of his life!

Jan. 23 1926

THE TRIUMPH OF TIME

Human Shows: Far Phantasies. By THOMAS HARDY. Macmillan. 7s. 6d.

The Dial

by his poetic genius on a plane where they attain universal significance and may be studied as typical of those storm and stress periods through which humanity has had to travail, to more and more self-knowledge, in that striving after complete self-consciousness which seems its goal.

In the eighteenth century new powers were struggling fiercely for expression, and the focus of the struggle was in France. The Romanticism of Rousseau found many disciples, and there was a general clamour, often uninformed, for a return to Nature—in other words, for abandonment to irresponsibility. Dreams of a simple life were a pleasant anodyne to the problems of civilisation, at that moment demanding a solution which could result only from much painful thought. On the other hand, Voltaire, the representative of reason, had an impish delight in tearing off the veneers of culture and exposing man as a victim of primitive instinct. While the literary world showed this splitting into sections of those who praised instinct and those who worshipped reason, the parasitic Court, legacy of Louis XIV., was frankly dilettante. Such energy as it possessed was dissipated in a feverish endeavour to shut out all that was unpleasant and to ignore the seething underworld fumbling towards conscious expression, but as yet inarticulate. The severity of the shock which destroyed the balance in France reverberated through Europe, thrilling the liberators and horrifying those who could govern only through repression. The symptoms of strain had foretold a sharp, severe crisis, and whether the critical period would admit of rapid readjustment with a gain in self-consciousness, or would pass into temporary insanity and general loss in European advance, would depend upon the power of France to ride the crisis without developing an obsession. With the coronation of the Man of Destiny, the obsession of world empire developed and the careerings of France united Europe against her.

Hardy's epic-drama begins in 1805, when Napoleon is massing troops for the English invasion and urging Villeneuve to keep the Channel clear for the transport of those troops across the Straits of Dover. Then, as in a kaleidoscope, street scenes, camps, battles, coronation festivities, Parliamentary debates, Corunna or Moscow

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HUMAN AND HAL-

By John

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6d. (Macmillan.)

several
Cold, cold! He
devotion of cruel and disa
love the writing, and when the rea
for himself he too will burst into laughter as

retreats are flashed before us—scenes of brilliance or of horror carrying us from Spain to Russia, from Paris to Vienna or Berlin, until the curtain is rung down upon Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo, and, with the return of the Bourbons to France, the insanity has run its course.

In the introduction Hardy deals with the objections which may be raised to his use of the term "Drama" for a work which is not intended for presentation upon the stage. He further disclaims any intention of propounding a philosophy by identifying himself with the opinions expressed by the characters of his supernatural framework. He says:—

> These impersonated Abstractions or Intelligences, called spirits, are to be taken by the reader for what they may be worth as contrivances of the fancy merely. Their doctrines are but tentative, and are advanced with little eye to a systematised philosophy warranted to lift "the burden of the mystery" of this unintelligible world.

Here the reader may protest that he finds a philosophy in this framework which is often in harmony with the apparent determinism of the novels; while this same framework renders apology for the form unnecessary: as the scenes are unrolled the reader finds himself looking at them from the viewpoint of the supernatural critic and the movements become intensely dramatic.

The Shade of the Earth and the Spirit of the Years play important parts in this dream overworld. Around them are grouped the spirit and chorus ironic—the Spirit Sinister and the Pities—the latter a group of young spirits who grieve over the evils to which men are subjected and question why this suffering should be. The Shade of the Earth and the Spirit of the Years repeatedly explain that all are moved by an immanent will which works ever unconsciously. On several occasions the mechanism of the will is made visible and the actors are shown linked to this mechanism, which moves incessantly, yet unconsciously, producing effects which man imagines to be the result of deliberate choice. The only actor in the drama who is conscious of being moved by a cosmic power is Napoleon. To the Queen of Prussia he says:—

> Some force within me, baffling mine intent,
> Harries me onward whether I will or no.
> My star, my star is what's to blame—not I.

Jan. 23 1926

THE TRIUMPH OF TIME

Human Shows: Far Phantasies. By THOMAS HARDY. Macmillan. 7s. 6d.

The Dial

"THE DYNASTS"

Upon which the Spirit of the Years makes the following comment:—

> He spoke thus at the Bridge of Lodi—Strange!
> He's of the few in Europe who discern
> The working of the Will.

And the Spirit of the Pities adds:—

> If that be so,
> Better for Europe lacked he such discerning.

The Spirits Ironic and Sinister are examples of projection. Hardy throws all his impatience and dread of inexplicable human suffering into the form of irony and seeks relief in those caustic remarks which shrivel the futile wailings of the Pities. Occasionally the Sinister Spirit mocks as if some evil genius were revelling in the spectacle of human misery, and we are reminded of the closing sentence in *Tess*.

The drama is divided into three parts, the first two having six acts and the third part seven. The acts are subdivided into scenes, through which the action is presented with that scrupulous attention to detail which suggests the historian rather than the dramatist. The transition from scene to scene is so skilfully made and the link between the natural and supernatural world so cleverly preserved by use of a spirit of rumour that, in spite of the detail, there are no blurred effects: the work moves rapidly from point to point with perfect artistry, and the feeling of unity is sustained throughout. The main action is expressed in dignified blank verse, noticeably free from ornament, yet stately to the verge of stiffness; where a certain harshness creeps in through an awkward turn of phrase it is in harmony with the catastrophe of the moment. Choruses of aerial music are used by the spirits as they comment on the action, events are sometimes foreshadowed by the rumours chanting in antiphons, and sailors or peasants break into song reminiscent of Gilbertian opera. Hardy drops too easily into irony to be at his best in the lyrical vein, yet he contrives to give some very fine lines to the Pities, particularly towards the end of the play. By means of street scenes, as at Nelson's funeral, or by semi-State functions—as a masked ball at the Prince Regent's house, or a visit to

the opera—the writer shows how the people in the several countries, and, in different grades of society, react to the great events: here the medium of expression is prose, terse, pithy, or vernacular as the occasion demands.

In Part I. the big events are the Battles of Trafalgar and Austerlitz, where England's great naval victory is balanced by Napoleon's defeat of Austria. The character of Villeneuve is subtly analysed to show how his evil fate is predestined by his temperament. When Villeneuve abandons the Channel scheme and takes refuge in Cadiz, Napoleon turns fiercely upon Admiral Décrès:—

To help a friend, you foul a country's fame!

And Décrès replies:—

True is it that this man has been my friend
Since boyhood made us schoolmates; and I say
That he would yield the heel-drops of his heart
To do his country service. Yet no less
Is it his drawback that he sees too far,
With joyful readiness this day, this hour,
And there are times, Sire, when a shorter sight
Charms Fortune more. A certain sort of bravery
Some people have—to wit, this same Lord Nelson,
Which is but fatuous faith in one's own star . . .
A headstrong blindness to contingencies
In some nice issues clearer sight would mar.
Carries the actor on, and serves him well
Such eyeless bravery Villeneuve has not;
But, Sire, he is no coward.

When the battle is over we find Villeneuve envying Lord Nelson.

Illustrious foe
And Teacher; Nelson; blest and over-blest
In thy outgoing at the noon of strife.
When Glory clasped thee round; while wayward Death
Refused my coaxings for the like-time call.

He continues:—

An emperor's chide is a command to die;
Better, far better, no percipience here.

The Spirit of the Years says:—

I'll speak; his mood is ripe for such a parle
(Sending a voice into Villeneuve's ear):
Thou dost divine the hour!

VILLENEUVE:

But those stern Nays!
That heretofore were audible to me
At each unhappy time I strove to pass.

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THE TRIUMPH OF TIME

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The Dial

"THE DYNASTS"

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS:

Have been annulled. The will grants exit freely;
Yea, it says "Now." Therefore make now thy time.

And Villeneuve commits suicide.

At Nelson's death a chorus of the Pities, accompanied by aerial music, chants:

His thread was cut too slowly. When he fell
And bade his fame farewell,
He might have passed and shunned his long-drawn pain
Endured in vain, in vain.

The reply given to the Spirit of the Years bears the impress of the nineteenth century conception of mechanical evolution:—

The cognizance, ye mourn, Life's doom to feel
If I report it, meetly, came unmeant,
Emerging with blind gropes from impercipience
By listless sequence—luckless, tragic Chance
In your more human tongue.

King George will not consent to a coalition, and Pitt, worn out by the cares of State, sinks under the news of the defeat at Austerlitz. Then comment in a strain similar to that just quoted follows, and Part I. closes upon a note of pessimism. (Pitt sinks slowly into a stupor from which he never awakens.) Spirit of the Pities to Spirit of the Years:—

Do you intend to speak to him ere the close?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS:

Nay, I have spoke too often! Time and time
When all Earth's light has lain on the nether side,
And yapping midnight winds have leapt on roofs
And raised for him an evil harlequinade
Of National disasters in long train
That tortured him with harrowing grimace
Have I communed with that intelligence.
Now I would leave him to pass out in peace
And seek the silence imperturbedly.

SPIRIT SINISTER:

Even Its official spirit can show ruth
At Man's fag end, when his destruction's sure!

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS:

It suits us ill to cavil each with each.
I might retort. I only say to thee
Its slaves we are: Its slaves must ever be!

CHORUS (*Aerial Music*):

Yea, from the Void we fetch like these
And tarry till That please

To null us by whose stress we emanate.
Our incorporeal sense, our supernal state,
Our over-seeings, our supernal Whence,
Our readings Why and Whence, our intelligence
Are but the flower of Man's intelligence
And, that but an unreckoned incident
Of the all-urging Will, raptly magnipotent.

Part II. opens with attempts at peace on the part of Fox, and the substance of the parleyings is chanted by the Rumours in Antiphons. Peace is made impossible by Napoleon's decree: "That in no circumstance, on no pretence, a party to our pact can Russia be." And the Spirit of the Pities breaks out:—

Alas! what prayer will save the struggling lands
Whose lives are ninepins to these bowling hands?

Fox has scarcely time to recover from the shock of the rumour that France secretly with Russia plights her troth, when the Spirit of the Pities asks:—

But what strange figure, pale and noiseless, comes
Into the very closet and retreat of England's minister?

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS:

The Tipstaff he of the Will,
The many-masked, my good friend, Death.

Fox is removed from the stage while the Pities exclaim:—

Here then ends
My hope for Europe's reason—wrought repose!
He was a friend of peace: No substitute remains.

Napoleon's power and fame increase as he sweeps over Prussia, meets Alexander at Tilsit, and turns his attention to Spain. Before the coronation of Joseph Buonaparte the usurpation is discussed at a conversazione at Lady Salisbury's house in London.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS:

O clarionists of human weltering,
Relate how Europe's madding movement brings
This easeful haunt into the path of palpitating things!

RUMOURS (*chanting*):

The Spanish King has bowed unto the Fate
Which bade him abdicate:
And Buonaparte has ruled that his and he
Henceforth displace the Bourbon dynasty.
The Spanish people handled, in such sort
As chattels of a Court,
Dream Dreams of England.

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The Dial

"THE DYNASTS"

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS:

So the Will heaves through Space and moulds the times,
With mortals for its fingers. We shall see
Again men's passions, virtues, visions, crimes
Obey resistlessly
The purposive, unmotived, dominant Thing
Which sways in brooding dark their wayfaring!

The Prince of Wales, in conversation with Viscount Materosa, reports that a great debate upon Spanish affairs will take place in the House of Commons, and Lady Salisbury sums up.

At last then England will take her place in the forefront of this mortal struggle, and in pure disinterestedness fight with all her strength for European deliverance. God defend the right!

The stragglers and deserters on the way to Corunna lend themselves to the grim irony of Hardy's realistic treatment and provide a sordid background as a foil to the courage and devotion of Moore and his friends.

Shortly before Corunna, Napoleon says to Marshal Soult:

I move into Astorga; then turn back
(Though only in my person do I turn),
And leave to you the destinies of Spain.

SPIRIT OF THE YEARS:

More turning may be here than he designs. In this small, sudden, swift turn backwards he suggests one turning from his apogee!

By ingenious setting and dexterous scene-shifting we follow Napoleon into Austria and note the success which leads to his marriage with Marie Louise, while we are kept in touch with the movements in Spain, are made poignantly aware of the Walcheren failure, and are present when the Spirit of the Years prophesies:

Before five more have joined the shotten years
Whose useless films infest the foggy past,
Traced thick with teachings glimpsed unheedingly,
The rawest dynast of the group concerned
Will, for the good or ill of mute mankind,
Down topple to the dust like soldier Saul,
And Europe's mouldy-minded oligarchs
Be propped anew.

Although the Spirit of the Years remains uncompromising in his pessimism, there is an unexpected gleam

of hope at the end of Part II. when a chorus of the Pities exclaims:

> Yet It may wake and understand
> Ere Earth unshapes, know all things and
> With knowledge use a painless hand,
> A painless hand!

The first scene of Part III. shows us Napoleon and his Grand Army on the banks of the Niemen preparing to cross into Russia; in the words of the leader,

> To bear War into her great gaunt land
> And spread our glory there as otherwhere.

The Russian Emperor's counter-proclamation is borne on the wind, and concludes:

> Ranksmen! Officers!
> You fend your lives, your land, your liberty!
> I am with you. Heaven frowns on the aggressor.

The Spirit Ironic aptly remarks:

> Ha! Liberty is quaint and pleases me
> Sounding from such a soil.

The malignant fate which now pursues Napoleon seems to stimulate Hardy's genius; and as disaster follows disaster, the sight of inevitable catastrophe confronted by human endurance calls forth the very spirit of tragedy and makes us forget the play of the will.

On the retreat from Moscow through Lithuania we see the Grand Army creep slowly as a caterpillar, "leaving on the ground minute particles of itself which are speedily flaked over and remain as white pimples by the wayside." We are told by the Spirit of the Pities:

> These atoms that drop off are snuffed out souls
> Who are enghosted by the caressing snow.

Before we can recover from our pain we have before us in dumb show the horrors of the Beresina crossing, where, under the discharge of the Russian guns and the weight of traffic, the bridge for the artillery gives way and the throngs upon it roll shrieking into the stream and are drowned. In the scene which immediately follows men sob or go mad when they learn that their leader has deserted them and hurried towards Paris; and the episode closes sardonically in anti-climax, throwing into relief the

cynicism of Napoleon, who, after discussing with Marie Louise his plans for a new army, says:

> And I intend
> Also to gild the dome of the Invalides
> In best gold leaf and on a novel pattern.
>
> MARIE LOUISE:
>
> To gild the dome, dear? Why?
>
> NAPOLEON:
>
> To give them something
> To think about. They'll take to it like children
> And argue in the cafés, right and left
> On its artistic points. So they'll forget
> The woes of Moscow.

The woes of Moscow may be forgotten, but it is not easy to replace the losses of Moscow; and the Russian *débâcle* unites the reigning monarchs, including the Austrian father-in-law, against Napoleon. At Leipsig there is a partial success, but a semi-chorus of Rumour remarks:

> For France and him
> Half-won is losing.

And the chorus replies:

> Yea, his hopes drop dim
> Since nothing less than victory to-day
> Had served a cause whose ruin is delay.

The story of Waterloo, including Ligny and Quatre Bras, is worked out in great detail and is intensely thrilling. A Recording Angel, the Rumours and other spirits recite and comment in such a way that we follow the vicissitudes of the fateful hours as if we were actual spectators. On the eve of Waterloo the French soldiers lie down at Mount Saint Jean in the dripping green wheat and rye while the English soldiers are huddled together on the ploughed ground in their wet blankets. This pause gives Hardy an opportunity to reveal his acute sense of the unity of life as he makes a Chorus of the Years show the sinister influence of man's strife upon the lower world.

> The mole's tunnelled chambers are crushed by wheels;
> The lark's eggs scattered, their owners fled,
> And the hedgehog's household the sapper unseals.
> Trodden and bruised to a miry tomb
> Are ears that have greened but will never be gold
> And flowers in the bud that will never bloom.

"I am a Bookman." *James*

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HUMAN AND HAL

BY JOHN

, if excusable, irrelevance has crept int
eferences to Mr. Thomas Hardy's ne
man Shows, etc."* That a poet shou
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ith dark and terrible things, has been
mentators upon Shelley; and it is to be
plainly in Mr. Hardy. A worm on a

Cold, cold

THE ENGLISH REVIEW

When Ney makes his famous cavalry charge we hear
the Spirit of the Pities:

Behold the gorgeous coming of those horse
Accoutred in kaleidoscopic hues
That would persuade us war has beauty in it.
Discern the troopers' mien: each with the air
Of one who is himself a tragedy.
The cuirassiers steeled, mirroring the day;
Red lancers, green chasseurs: behind the blue
The red: the red before the green:
A lingering on till late in Christendom
Of the barbaric trick to terrorize
The foe by aspect.

Pater has said that "All art constantly aspires towards the condition of music," and truly this part of the drama suggests a brilliantly scored piece of orchestral music. Distant rumblings of cannon break through the strains of the Copenhagen Waltz, played by the violins. Horns and other wind instruments sound the alarm, and dancing stops abruptly as "A long-drawn metallic purl of sound echoes through the ballroom and the long roll of the side-drums is taken up by the other drums, further and further away." Phrases of a *danse macabre* call attention to a spectral figure pirouetting from the ballroom in front of Brunswick and others, doomed to fall in the approaching battle, while strident brasses suggest the confusion of troops hurrying to obey the unexpected call. The violins but once more dancing is interrupted by long, hollow, rolling notes, becomes fitful and spiritless, and the dance tune is smothered in the plaintive music of farewell. Martial strains predominate as the soldiers march out from Brussels to the tune of "The Girl I Left Behind Me," or, for the Highland regiments, "Hieland Laddie." There is a general slackening and lull as the troops recede from the city; but with a harsh clangour of brass comes, *accelerando*, and every instrument finds a place in the score as the thunder of the guns, the neighing of horses, the shrieks and groans of the wounded and dying are worked into one bewildering *scherzo*, with Wagnerian discords, recalling at one moment a mad Valkyrie ride, or again suggestive of a planet in dissolution.

The Dial

"THE DYNASTS"

The carnage becomes so dreadful that the Spirit of the Pities asks:

> Is this the last Esdraelon of a moil
> For mortal man's effacement?

To which the Spirit Ironic replies:

> Warfare mere
> Plied by the managed for the managers,
> To wit by frenzied folk who profit nought
> For those who profit all!

Napoleon makes a last attempt to rally his forces, and, failing, exclaims: "They are crushed! So it has ever been since Crecy!"

As he mounts a horse to ride off, the Spirit of Rumour remarks:—

> He loses his last chance of dying well.

We catch a final glimpse of him in the wood of Bossu, where he is stung by spectral questionings, and is dismissed in these words by the Spirit of the Years:—

> Worthless these kneadings of thy narrow thought,
> Napoleon! gone thy opportunity!
> Such men as thee, who wade across the world
> To make an epoch, bless, confuse, appal,
> Are in the elemental ages chart
> Like meanest insects on obscurest leaves—
> But incidents and grooves of Earth's unfolding.

The final scene takes place in the overworld where the Spirit of the Pities protests to the Spirit of the Years:

> Thou arguest still the inadvertent mind;
> But, even so, shall blankness be for aye?
> Men gained cognition with the flux of time;
> And wherefore not the force informing them?

To which the Spirit of the Years replies with a question:

> What would'st have hoped and had the will to be?

This gives the Pities an opportunity to praise:

> The alone whose means the end shall justify.

Although to the Years "such quiring is scarce consistent with our spectacle," the last word is given to the Pities, and the note of hope, sounded at the end of

Part II., swells into a prophetic chorus, which closes the drama with a vision of Life as an "Eternal Becoming":

But—a stirring thrills the air
Like to sounds of joyance there
That the rages
Of the ages
Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were
Consciousness the will informing, till it fashion all things fair.

Although, in the early stages of the drama, Hardy insists upon "an arch-determinator who neither good nor evil knows," the characters of the play are never mere puppets: they invariably act as if they had freedom of choice. The epic hero, Napoleon, posing as the Man of Destiny, really owed his success as a liberator to his identification of himself with the controlling power which Hardy, in a flash of inspiration, describes as:

A will that wills above the will of each;
Yet, but the will of all conjunctively.

It is when the liberator uses his magnetic power of control for personal aggrandisement that he becomes inhuman in his indifference to the sacrifices demanded by his egoism; and as a mechanism of defence against self-reproach he claims to be ruled by the pitiless planet of Destiny. (As the Pities say):

So he fulfils the inhuman antikings
He thinks imposed upon him.

Napoleon is not entirely successful in his attempt to repress all sense of responsibility, and, from time to time, in suggestions and visions, he is made aware of the price he must pay for his betrayal of Liberty. Early in the drama, at the coronation in Milan Cathedral, the Spirit of the Pities throws a whisper into Napoleon's ear:

Lieutenant Buonaparte,
Would it not seemlier be to shut thy heart
To these unhealthy splendours? Helmet thee
For her thou swearest to first—fair Liberty?

Napoleon dismisses the whisper as "Aggressive fancy working spells upon a mind overwrought." Thereupon a moral panorama would do him no harm." Thereupon a vision passes before Napoleon as he lies, comprising hundreds of thousands of skeletons and corpses in various stages of decay. They rise from his various battlefields, and are presented by the Duc d'Enghien as showman.

Jan. 23 1926

THE TRIUMPH OF TIME

Human Shows: Far Phantasies. By THOMAS HARDY. Macmillan. 7s. 6d.

The Dial

"THE DYNASTS"

During the battle Napoleon starts up, exclaiming: "A horrible dream has gripped me—horrible! I saw before me Lannes—just as he looked that day at Aspern, mutilated, bleeding! 'What—blood again?' he said to me. 'Still blood?'"

After the battle he again seeks refuge in determinism.

> Great men are meteors that consume themselves
> To light the Earth. This is my burnt-out hour.

As we saw above, he is contemptuously dismissed by the Spirit of the Years.

The Dynasts is unique in English literature in that it recreates for us an historical episode in such a way that it crystallises the philosophic speculation of one epoch and yet in brilliant flashes is illuminated by the thought of a later and distinctly different period. This Janus aspect is lost upon those critics who say that Hardy, having no message, had no will to creation, therefore his work is little more than a monument of nineteenth century pessimism. In making Napoleon the instrument of his own defeat, Hardy may be described as drawing upon his unconscious, which was in advance of his conscious, mind. He did not intend to exempt Napoleon from the play of the will, but rather to show him as dowered with a prescience denied to the other characters in the drama. A flash of inspiration carries the writer beyond his conscious purpose, and the will stands revealed, not as a force outside man, using him as a tool, but as man's own will, working blindly, blundering, yet groping constantly towards more self-conscious control. Further, the artist is inspired to see that the will must become conscious: man must learn that his will responds to feelings and fancies of the origin and importance of which he is quite unaware. As tentatively and in flashes the author's conception of the will changes from that of arch-determinator, "who neither good nor evil knows," to that of "A will that wills above the will of each; yet, but the will of all conjunctively," so the author is passing from the idea of mechanical to that of creative evolution. He is linked to Einstein, of whose *Theory of Relativity* Lord Haldane has said: "We came back to knowledge as the foundation of reality to which all else was relative." Shelley, in *Prometheus Unbound*, has a vision of surpassing beauty in which "Conquest is

dragged captive through the deep," and "Love folds over the world its healing wings"; yet it is significant that the prophecies are fulfilled in Prometheus or Knowledge, although the vision is inspired by Shelley's desire to make permanent a moment of emotional ecstasy. Bernard Shaw, in *Back to Methuselah*, makes man find rest and fulfilment in a purely contemplative life; but the brilliant wit, unlike Shelley's imagery, does not suffice to make us, even momentarily, forget that change is a law of life, and we are repelled by the dreary ancients. Hardy has not ventured to forecast the future, but in the hope that consciousness may inform the will, we are free to picture man making his adaptations to environment more harmoniously and at less cost, while he retains his capacity for infinite change. In the words of Bergson, "The gates of the future stand open to mankind."

It is not possible to read *The Dynasts* without reference to the world-war from which Europe has so recently emerged. When the clamour of the French Revolution had quite died away the idea of nationality unified the states of Italy and of Germany. The latter country immediately set out for the old goal of world-empire, and Europe was again shocked into confusion. In the League of Nations and American Peace Conference the idea of a commonwealth of nations is struggling for definite form. In the development of the individual a crisis is often produced when the promptings of intuition and the play of instinct are repressed in an attempt to make reason the sole arbiter, so there is danger that world development may be hindered by conflict, if the scientific spirit of the West refuses consideration to the intuitive mysticism of the East or scope for the instinctive development of the primitive races. As we reflect upon the civilisations that have passed away and try to divine the future, it is surely no small tribute to the genius of Thomas Hardy to admit that we cannot go beyond the hope expressed in the closing lines of *The Dynasts*:

> But a stirring thrills the air
> Like to sounds of joyance there
> That the rages
> Of the ages
> Shall be cancelled, and deliverance offered from the darts that were,
> Consciousness the Will informing, till it fashion all things fair.

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comparable. It ma
use the term know

The Dial
(N.Y.)
June 1927.

THE POETRY OF THOMAS HARDY

COLLECTED POEMS OF THOMAS HARDY. *12mo. 818 pages. The Macmillan Company. $3.50.*

THE collected poems of Thomas Hardy go far to suggest the truth of the view that the tragic ways of feeling, though less animated than the buoyant, are more alive. It is surely not often that one finds in the ranks of the merely affirmative such extremity of consciousness, such magnitude and delicacy of sentience as is implied in Thomas Hardy's courageous and sombre honesty of question.

His greatest sympathies being for life's most living moments, his themes naturally must come from the realms of passion; by nature he seems passionately unresigned, scornful of the glassy consolations of philosophy, hostile to the machine of the world, sleepless in the militance of his pity. Seldom, surely, has characteristic woman, who is likewise so feelingly alive, had a profounder sympathizer than Thomas Hardy, or a painter better endowed or more faithful to set forth her actualities of being in full character and colour.

To designate the creative emotion of Thomas Hardy as pessimistic seems a meagre description indeed. Pessimism implies an acceptance of the world at its worst, with a particular acceptance of the inevitability of human frailty. Though Thomas Hardy is not an optimist, it would be a misappreciation of the fidelity with which he depicts lives laid waste by passion and frailty and fate to suppose that he accepts them as the pessimist accepts them. He does not. It is not pessimism but compassion; it is his enormous earnestness to exact a "full look at the Worst" that gives pungency and tragic point to his large sombre masterpieces of depiction. Euripides is cited as the ancient exemplar of the force of pity in a great temperament; and one can make no doubt of the force of his rebel resolution. So with Thomas Hardy, one should not mistake composure for resignation, or sombreness for surrender.

Mr Hardy employs the lyric form in two ways: perhaps most

and we think we succeed. And yet, turning to Hardy, I become

man. It was w
James Stephen d
in his *Ecclesiast*

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find the Golden Day so pure, nor the Gilded Age so cheap as he does, although it must have been bad enough. In regard to morals and manners it is arguable that our present is only a degeneration of the Gilded Age, and yet it has its points of attraction. They are trivial points, no doubt, and their sum, even, will go only a short way to help us to know "what it means to live a whole life"; but they exist and if we are not to separate ourselves from the world, if we are to live complete lives, not as Thoreau, but in the crowd, we can appreciate, value correctly, and subdue to our uses everything from fast motor cars to quantum theory.

Mr Mumford's indifference to superficial America is a mark of his seriousness. His whole book is an attack on protestantism and industrialism; his ideal position is that of the humanist. Actually I discover overtones of protestantism in him. He cares for unity—a classic ideal—with a puritanic fervour. And it happens that America is all scattered and diverse, a circumstance which offends Mr Mumford so much that in his whole book there is hardly a reference to the side of American life which balances, or at least matches, the influence of the pioneer. I mean the influence of the immigrant. The Golden Day thus becomes the story of the rise and decline of the Anglo-Saxon in America; quite possibly that is the central episode of our first hundred years as a nation. That it can continue to have supreme importance in the second hundred years I consider doubtful. If we are to persist and create a culture we will have to master the machine, we will have to order our own chaos, we will have to create new values; all these things Mr Mumford makes imperative, with passion and persuasiveness. I think only that his terms of reference are not wide enough, that a certain urbane catholicism is wanting. But philologically, whatever is urbane is regarded with suspicion by Mr Mumford.

GILBERT SELDES

Jan. 23 1926

THE TRIUMPH OF TIME

Human Shows: Far Phantasies. By THOMAS HARDY. Macmillan. 7s. 6d.

numerously he uses it as narrative in small, the history of a heart; again, he uses it more purely as the voice of a single feeling and moment. It is of the first mode, possibly, that he is most thinking when he describes his poems, which he does more than once, as "dramatic and personative"—"and this even when they are not obviously so." But is he ever dramatic except in the drama of the closet, the drama of contemplation? His present lyric speakers seem no more detached dramatically from the powerfully conditioning regard of their author than the persons of his fiction; they are as heavily umbered with the darkness and the fires of his general emotional intent. He is not the dramatist, the emotional mimic throwing himself utterly into a projected *rôle*. He is the sympathetic contemplator, seeing life best, and best setting it forth in ample views, views coloured with his special feeling, views in which the living forms are seen against a background hardly less living, hardly less feelingly depicted than themselves. And doubtless it is a main factor in the force of his art that we do not see the subjects of his picturing detach themselves ever from their created atmosphere; that they rather appear illustriously *en bloc* with the whole dusk wealth of his total affection by life. For this reason one cannot but feel that in comparison with the men and women of his novels, the persons of his lyrics often appear at a disadvantage. They too have their story which is to be told; yet it must be told here with but a scant share of that breathing magnificence of setting which only he, working with sumptuous sombre tenderness, in the full scope enabled by the novel or the closet drama, could give.

The lyrics in his stricter mode, voicing a single personal feeling or moment of expression, seem for the most part poetically superior to his semi-narrative poems. In the purer of them he finely intensifies his prevailing feeling; and these are as beautiful as they are characteristic, as for example, First or Last:

"If grief come early
Joy comes late,
If joy come early
Grief will wait;
Aye, my dear and tender!

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Wise ones joy them early
While the cheeks are red,
Banish grief till surly
Time has dulled their dread.

And joy being ours
Ere youth has flown,
The later hours
May find us gone;
Aye, my dear and tender!"

Yet it is difficult in general to describe his sombre power and density of feeling as *song;* its extremest poignance is quiet and seems a little stopped in timbre. Is there really much harmony between the ultimate singing, the piercing utter purity that we look for in lyric poetry, and these dark spreading swells of feeling? The lyric is intense, not massive. It is made, perhaps, as much by the heart's exclusions as by its takings. To sing to the top of singing in one theme, it is possibly needed that one shall be insensitive to others, for the moment to all others. But what if the heart be pan-aesthetic? And has it not been Thomas Hardy's characteristic preoccupation to be appealed to at large by the surpassing transient loveliness and the pain and cruelty of the entire world of life within his ken? The fact, possibly, is that so inspecific, so all-mirroring a mood may by its native potency inspire powerful emotional utterance, but we are expecting a good deal if we expect it frequently to sing to the top of singing.

The shaped ecstasy, the skilled extremity of the certain lyric are things one finds here only with some searching. These serried ranks of powerful verse suggest a great emotional vitality; but they suggest too, a possible infrequency of that intuitive yet cultivated felicity of choice among moments and means, which, one would think, the lyric poet, before all artists, should have; for though something, no doubt, can be made of every mood and every impression, it is evidently not all such that sweep clear to the true flight. And there are here, perhaps, other lyric deficiencies. It is not apparent that the lyric talents are identical with the depictive; nor is it clear that great emotional endowment guarantees that the poet shall write infallibly in "the tongue of heaven"; Mr Hardy, one is obliged to notice, does not. Where few equal him

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in force and volume of pronouncement, several pass him in technique of utterance. There is that about his rhythm, his vowel structure, his diction, his occasionally libertarian idiom which suggests a not very adept command of the technical resources of the art; for many of his verses he appears not overlong to have "searched the alphabet for letters soft." There seem, indeed, to be some intermissions in his sense of language; for example, his not strictly chastened penchant for coining and compounding words. It is a difficult pleasure which the ear can take, if it can take any, in such locutions as *noonshine*, *mindsight*, *scareless*, *bloomage*, *wormwood-worded*, *foredame*, *phasmal*, however skilfully they may be fitted in their context; the somewhat problematical charm of freshness which they achieve seems hardly to compensate for their summary buffeting of one's established expectations. And while such words no doubt represent the extreme of his licence, the tendency of which they are the culmination is perhaps best indicated by saying that he is, amid his so keenly sympathetic watch o'er man's mortality, somewhat careless of the possibilities of strict taste, of the "ear industrious and attention meet" of that verbal craftsman who ought to reside in every poet.

But whatever a reader may think of the general technical qualities of music in these poems, their body and dignity of significance as a poetry of humanity and their force of feeling are too great to be other than attentively and respectfully received. Whoever cares for honesty and courage of view should certainly find them in these passages of deep feeling, of which the word *unflinching*, perhaps, is a term more accurately descriptive than the word *pessimistic*. It is easy enough, of course, to find and to dwell upon the many moments and poems in which the poet seems over-inclined toward the numb nullity of pessimism. But the careful-minded reader will hardly feel justified in neglecting those other poems, such as "For Life I Had Never Cared Greatly" or The Lacking Sense, God-forgotten, Mute Opinion, On a Fine Morning, and others, in which an evidently different note is sounded; such pieces are not numerous perhaps, but they are several. At all events it can be no specious affirmative that shall hope to face Thomas Hardy's dark force, whether that force be considered a force of question or one of denial.

CHARLES K. TRUEBLOOD

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BRIEFER MENTION

TRUMPS, A Collection of Short Stories, compiled by the Community Workers of the New York Guild for the Jewish Blind (10mo, 348 pages; Putnam: $2) is a thoroughly democratic compilation, with Willa Cather's A Gold Slipper seated alphabetically beside Octavus Roy Cohen's The Lion and the Uniform, and with John Galsworthy and Sam Hellman rubbing literary elbows. It contains, in general, the second-string work of first-string writers and the first-string work of second-string writers. There is ample variety, and even in the stories of minor importance, one finds technical skill and sound observation.

THE GOLDEN DANCER, by Cyril Hume (12mo, 261 pages; Doran: $2) veers as sharply away from his second novel as his second did from his first; Mr Hume is one of the younger writers promisingly free from the sin of complacency. His work is still experimental, but it is not thin. Here he celebrates a certain lyric quality which runs like a vein of fine gold through commonplace people leading ordinary lives; the poet is never quite submerged in the novelist. The Golden Dancer is romance touched with rhapsody.

THE EXQUISITE PERDITA, by E. Barrington (12mo, 377 pages; Dodd, Mead: $2.50) further extends the author's growing gallery of historical persons dipped in fiction. Here Sheridan and Garrick and the sometime mistress of George the Fourth are given a coating of the same confection which has previously made the lives of Lord Nelson and Lady Hamilton and of Byron quite palatable to a considerable number of readers. The stuff is sweetly stilted and smoothly applied; it presents an adequate picture of the period, and it does no serious violence to the incidents with which it deals.

DESERT: A Legend, by Martin Armstrong (12mo, 275 pages; Harpers: $2.50) lacks oases. One cannot work up much enthusiasm over it—even by irrigation.

Almost any poem among the SELECTED POEMS OF EDITH M. THOMAS, edited with a Memoir by Jessie B. Rittenhouse (12mo, 247 pages; Harpers: $2) will serve to illustrate the purity and keeping, of her lyric gift; but the sonnets, perhaps, show it most at ease within its range. The poems in general bespeak an emotional experience rising naturally into a certain fine clarity of song; and this formed fine smoothness does not break but does it not sometimes yield? Of the sonnets, however, this could not be said. One might think of Keats, to be sure, in reading the sonnet Music, or the sonnet Ephemera, or Frost, or Migration; but one does not in hearing of the moths, those "Candle-elves," or in seeing "the clover toss its purples on the breeze." One takes such things quite for themselves for they are current gold.

cutting from The New Statesman

Jan. 23 1926

THE TRIUMPH OF TIME

Human Shows: Far Phantasies. By THOMAS HARDY. Macmillan. 7s. 6d.

Why is Hardy so different from every other poet in the world? There are many of them more beautiful, many more varied; but I know not one that gives his peculiar effect. Why is it? And, first of all, what is it? The reader who lays down a volume of Hardy's poetry seems, to put it at briefest, not so much to have read as to have lived and suffered through it; to have seen and felt the nakedness of life with an intensity that, in self-defence, we cannot carry into our permanent consciousness. Lenses so strong, vision so clear, would only strain and perhaps distort the eyes that looked always through them; and yet, for the moment, we would not change their colourless crystal for all the glories of stained-glass or gilded mirror, all the gorgeous unreality of Milton's Eden or the dreams of Prospero. It is a strange, tangled mood these poems bring—painful, yet thrilled; saddened, yet exhilarated; appalled by life, yet fascinated to snatch more eagerly than ever the most we may from its unrelenting brevity; angry with the world and the harsh helplessness of men, and yet valuing more than before the brave, blind courage and hope and loyalty with which they stumble to their end. But then is not this precisely the effect of great drama? It is; but with a difference. *The Cherry Orchard*, for example, may leave behind it a mood not unakin to this. And that is no accident. It is not only in *The Dynasts* that Hardy is a dramatist, though most of his tragedies pass swiftly before us in the space of a page or little more: that sense for situations, that sensitiveness to their perpetual irony, that swift power of dialogue are the gifts of one who by nature looks on life dramatically. Perhaps, indeed, no lyric poetry, except Browning's, has been so dramatic since the days of Donne, and the time when drama itself was half lyrical. And yet no stage play can possess the same simple directness of appeal. The art and the artifice are more conscious and more complex there: we remain half-aware that the actors are actors, and we spectators, and the curtains plush, and the play, after all, "a play." Or again, to follow up the suggestion of *The Cherry Orchard*, we may compare, in their effect, Hardy's poems with Tchekov's tales. These, too, have the same utter and unvarnished truthfulness. And yet there remains, here too, a difference. In their convention, as on the stage, the author remains hidden. But the convention of the lyric poet, on the contrary, invites and enables him to reveal himself with a truth and freedom that prose denies. We have, then, in Hardy a vision of life as unsparing as Tchekov's; but we have the revelation, also, of the thoughts of the seer himself.

But this brings us back to the poets; how does Hardy stand apart from them? Have not others held up to life a mirror that likewise showed both the world and themselves? The answer is, simply, that their mirrors have usually been distorting in their picture of the world; and, even where they have not been so, the value has lain rather in the beauty of their images than in their truth, and we look at them, rather than at reality through them. Theirs is a different, a more artistic, perhaps, at their best, a more lasting worth; but they are different, that is the point. Under the spell of Hardy, all the chatter about pure art value and pure aesthetic emotions seems stilled like the twitter of little birds under the menacing shadow of an eagle's wing. So might the top of human artistry have seemed a feeble and frivolous thing to Aeneas, as with eyes unsealed for a moment by his mother's touch he saw above the battle the misty shapes of the gods that hated Troy—

> dirae facies inimicaque Troiae
> Numina magna deum—

tumbling the towers of Priam's city into one abyss of seething flame. And then one remembers, in simple justice, that this picture is itself, after all, a pure artist's dream. We need both; and it is our good fortune that we can possess and enjoy dream and vision alike. When first the Muses found Hesiod asleep on the side of Helicon, they sang to him that they could tell both truth and lies with beauty; and poets have been licensed to lie ever since—to the extreme irritation of Plato and others. But it is the distinction of Hardy that he seems, to lovers of his poetry, the truthfullest of all poets in the world.

Contrast him, for instance, with Wordsworth, who only died when Hardy was a boy of ten, whose love of the countryside and its characters is in some ways so like. What is the great *Ode on Intimations of Immortality* but the beautiful cenotaph of an immortal imbecility, which the poet himself half disowned when questioned by clergymen of the Established Church? Yet we determine, wisely, that this shall not matter to our enjoyment: and we think we succeed. And yet, turning to Hardy, I become aware that the two are comparable or can be reconciled, but whether they are even comparable. It may well be that it is a source of confusion to use the term knowledge otherwise than in a communicative sense, that is to say, in respect of truths which can be presented with compelling force to all normal minds; and that where the path of insight must be trodden in solitude, other language is needed.

The debate of these great questions is not rendered easier by the fact that they touch our most intimate practical concerns: the moral government and the destiny of mankind. For reasons which it is not difficult to analyse, the claims of religion have rarely, if ever, been presented in divorce from the claims of a moral ideal; and to propound a theory of the spiritual order which does not imply some doctrine as to man's place therein would seem difficult even for the most extreme pessimist. And the concern is not all on one side. We cannot disguise the fact that religion as a social force has not infrequently proved the enemy of man's betterment. We venture to think that not a few who read this book will feel that the questions debated in its pages would not have been presented less truthfully if they had been permitted to appear more burning. Little light is thrown upon the question how far an organised religion may be a necessary basis for social morality, and how far religion so conceived can live in harmony with the spirit of free inquiry.

MAURICE AMOS.

PHILOLOGY FOR BEGINNERS

History in English Words. By OWEN BARFIELD. Methuen. 6s.

As a rule we are not greatly enamoured of the popular manual of metaphysics made mild and motherly, or of treatises on Relativity in words of one syllable. A shingled Samson ceases to be a strong man, and a bobbed book is not much better. Real knowledge, after all, demands real hard work; and there is no royal road to scholarship. But we confess that we cannot always keep up this austerity of virtue; we are every now and then compelled to relax our standard and make exceptions. To such an exception we have been driven by this little book of Mr. Barfield's. These two hundred not too congested pages of pleasant writing and easy reading seem to us precisely fitted to form a sound introduction to deeper researches, and to create an abiding interest in one of the most inexhaustible and fascinating of all subjects—the study of words. More elementary than Mr. Pearsall Smith's *Words and Idioms*, which we recently reviewed in these columns, it is, like that admirable work, accurate without pedantry and light without tenuity. It is, further, informed throughout by a love not merely of words but of literature, and reveals a man of no narrow cast of mind. We have indeed seen few works of the class so unpretentious and yet so exact. For a beginner of the right mental turn, we can unhesitatingly recommend it. We knew a profound philologer, to whom Brugmann was as familiar as his garter and Verner's Law a plaything, whose career was started by the reading of Trench's *Study of Words*; and we can well believe that in the 1950's a scholar of like calibre will own similar obligations to Mr. Barfield.

And this though the book is not without faults. Like that zealous Protestant parent who had his child baptised Martin Luther and lived to see him a Catholic priest, Mr. Barfield has been a little premature in giving his book a name. The title-page suits the infancy of the work, but hardly its middle period, and certainly not its slippered and spectacled conclusion. There is indeed a good deal of "history" in it; but there is more of philosophy (mild it is true), of science (milder still), of theology, of mechanics, of religion and imagination.

Nor does the publishers' note on the covering wrapper give a more correct account of the contents. The book is far from "opening up new ground in the fascinating field of philology." Its merit lies in the very fact that it does nothing of the kind; it is not the business of an introductory treatise to broach new theories or strike out original lines. We have seen it all before; much of it, for instance, may be found in Moulton's two Cambridge lectures on the Science of Language; and a student who goes further in the subject will find it all again in more scientific treatises. It is enough if a primer of this kind gives him little to unlearn.

There are also a few actual errors, of which, in fulfilment of our duty as a reviewer, we must point out two or three. On p. 161, for example, Mr. Barfield tells us that the *Natural History of Enthusiasm* was written by a zealous and dogmatic Churchman. It was written by a lay Nonconformist—as indeed Sir James Stephen detected from internal evidence alone, and stated in his *Ecclesiastical Biography*. And Mr. Barfield could easily,

x Virg. Aen. VI. 304

HUMAN SHOWS.

HUMAN SHOWS. Far Phantasies. By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan. 7s. 6d. net.)

Mr. Hardy is eighty-five years old. But genius shares the privilege of the gods: *cruda deo viridisque senectus.* He is still fully himself and, what is more, still able to express himself for us. And the poetry, which was always in him, which began before his novels, which gave them, for lovers of poetry, a special place among novels, to which he returned without disguise after the last of the novels, is still the art of his old age, saying for him what prose can no longer say. No doubt some of the poems included in this volume are old. But others are dated within the last few years or months. None indeed is very long, and nearly all are very short. But Mr. Hardy's poetry has generally taken the form of short lyrical or narrative pieces; and what we get here is another volume of brief summings-up of his sense of the meaning of life, little scenes, short stories, brief and pregnant utterances of the questions which life has continually forced him to ask, and of the only answers he has been able to give to them.

All who know his writings will know what to expect. As in his novels, as even more in his earlier volumes of poetry, so here still, the old man sees almost exclusively the tragic side of the spectacle of things, sees in life a riddle of sorrow to which he seldom offers any answer but that of silence. There are many who, having lost power to accept any of the old answers, are content, while they wait for a final answer, to give themselves a sort of provisional consolation of hope in sharing the great Darwin's conviction that, even in this world of sentient existence as we know it, there is reason to believe that "happiness decidedly prevails." But Mr. Hardy either does not believe that or is not content with it. At any rate he finds that man's reason, which, as it seems to him, compels us to judge the world, to ask for explanations of it, and then to reject them, is on the whole a cruel gift; so that, as he says in one of these new poems,

> Loosed from wrings of reason,
> We might blow like flowers,
> Sense of Time-wrought treason
> Would not then be ours
> In and out of season;
> Loosed from wrings of reason
> We should laud the Powers!

So "Consciousness" is for him an "exotic germ" which "unblinds"

> Earth's old-established innocence
> Of stains and stingings,

and the problem for the seers is either to "oust this awareness" or

> Limit its registerings to good
> And hide from it all anguishment;

and the poet, making no choice between these alternatives, concludes by a wonder whether

> May-be now
> Normal unwareness waits rebirth.

For the rest the new poems are, as we said, of the old sort. All the stories exhibit the perversity of Fate—"life's little Ironies," as he called them long ago. And they are not always little, those ironies. It is not merely that everybody, as it were, misses his train in these poems; they are full of graver disasters—the man marries the wrong woman, the bridegroom is killed on the way to church, the humble lover lives forgotten, and wherever happiness begins to dawn the cloud of death lies waiting to overwhelm it. And the last word is not here, as in "The Dynasts," of

> Consciousness the will informing,
> Till it fashion all things fair:

it is, at best, resignation and silence. The note of the opening poem is, with hardly an exception, that of all in the book:—

> A star looks down at me,
> And says: "Here I and you
> Stand, each in our degree:
> What do you mean to do,—
> Mean to do?"
>
> I say: "For all I know,
> Wait, and let Time go by,
> Till my change come."—"Just so,"
> The star says: "So mean I:—
> So mean I."

That could not have been written by anyone but Mr. Hardy. One would instantly know it for his in any anthology.

And that, perhaps, is one of the things which most clearly prove genius. It is easy to find these poems rather depressing; but it is not possible to deny the grave beauty of the best of them; and it is quite impossible for a moment to doubt the authorship of any, best or worst. They all exhibit the Hardy touch, with its strength which is not always afraid of being confused with roughness, its austerity which is as tender as it is stern. And there is Nature everywhere; the infinite and universal nature of clouds and winds and stars, and the particular nature of Wessex. Here too, as in the novels, the finest effects are got out of a mingling of Man and Nature. Take this for instance: which are we more aware of, the man or the darkening road under the trees?:—

NOBODY COMES.

> Tree-leaves labour up and down,
> And through them the fainting light
> Succumbs to the crawl of night.
> Outside in the road the telegraph wire
> To the town from the darkening land
> Intones to travellers like a spectral lyre
> Swept by a spectral hand.
>
> A car comes up, with lamps full-glare,
> That flash upon a tree;
> It has nothing to do with me,
> And whangs along in a world of its own,
> Leaving a blacker air:
> And mute by the gate I stand again alone,
> And nobody pulls up there.

It is open to the criticism that the very last word does not appear to have any particular business except to make a rhyme. But how fine the poem is in its way, and how characteristic of the grim loneliness so continually haunted by Mr. Hardy's imagination!

There are a few longer poems, the least successful things in the book, partly because several of them deal with the subject of unequal marriages—which has always, as the novels show, had a very unlucky attraction for Mr. Hardy. And there are a few beautiful sketches, as it were, of pure Nature, little, or not at all, touched by man—such as "Night Time in Mid-Fall" and "Snow in the Suburbs." But, even when Nature is the dominant note, Mr. Hardy seems to need at least a suggestion of the presence of man to enable him to create that poetic world which is peculiarly, uniquely, his own. His "Autumn," for instance, is mainly falling leaves and lengthening shadows—at least they are in the foreground—but the poem would not be what it is if we were not aware of human fate, the brevity of youth, and the oncoming of age and death, visible or audible behind them:—

THE LATER AUTUMN.

> Gone are the lovers, under the bush
> Stretched at their ease;
> Gone the bees,
> Tangling themselves in your hair as they rush
> On the line of your track,
> Leg-laden, back
> With a dip to their hive
> In a prepossessed dive.
>
> Toadsmeat is mangy, frosted, and sere:
> Apples in grass
> Crunch as we pass,
> And rot ere the men who make cyder appear.
> Couch-fires abound
> On fallows around,
> And shades far extend
> Like lives soon to end.
>
> Spinning leaves join the remains shrunk and brown
> Of last year's display
> That lie wasting away,
> On whose corpses they earlier as scorners look down
> From their aery green height:
> Now in the same plight
> They huddle: while yon
> A robin looks on.

lecture notes of a student at a horticultural college, filled out with all—or nearly all—the obvious garden quota-

"The Manchester City News" 6.10.28

That Thomas Hardy was keenly sensitive to criticism and the thought of being misunderstood is plainly evidenced in the preface to his last book of poems published this week ("Winter Words": Macmillan. 7s. 6d.) He complains that the reviewers had pronounced his previous volume (Human Shows: Far Phantasies) to be wholly gloomy and pessimistic. He adds: "However, I did not suppose that the licensed tasters had wilfully misrepresented the book, and said nothing, knowing well that they could not have read it." It is a melancholy thought that a writer of great genius should have been thus tormented by the reception accorded to one of his books; but it is nevertheless true that he was commonly regarded as being a prophet without comfort and a poet without hope. Only when we look below the surface of his poems is it possible to come upon his fitful glimmerings of faith; yet with the discovery of these, his attitude is seen to be that of the restless questioner rather than one of total unbelief.

"The Times' Weekly Edition" 11.10.28 (cont.)

HARDY'S LAST POEMS.

WINTER WORDS IN VARIOUS MOODS AND METRES. By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan. 7s. 6d. net.)

The poems in this book are not the sweepings of Thomas Hardy's study floor. They were made ready, 103 in number, by him for publication on his birthday. He wrote for the collection an introductory note, in which, besides revealing a very sensitive great man's liability to be hurt by the sayings of insensitive little men, he assured the world that the poems had been "prepared with reasonable care, if not quite with the zest of a young man new to print."

Suppose that his name had been unknown and these "Winter Words" the first volume of a young man new to print. What should we have said on reading the first poem in the book?

THE NEW DAWN'S BUSINESS.

What are you doing outside my walls,
O Dawn of another day?
I have not called you over the edge
Of the heathy ledge,
So why do you come this way,
With your furtive footstep without sound here,
And your face so deedily gray?

"I show a light for killing the man
Who lives not far from you,
And for bringing to birth the lady's child,
Nigh domiciled,
And for earthing a corpse or two,
And for several other such odd jobs round here
That Time to-day must do.

"But you he leaves alone (although,
As you have often said,
You are always ready to pay the debt
You don't forget
You owe for board and bed:)
The truth is, when men willing are found here
He takes those loth instead."

We should surely have said that here was an original and complex mind. "Deedily gray"—evidently he has not lost touch with rural England. "Nigh domiciled"—but he can be queerly stiff and bookish. "A corpse or two"—"several other such odd jobs"—there is a streak of roughness in him. And the last verse shows him bitter, or disappointed. But how beautiful the sound and how haunting the feeling of the first verse; and how definitely he knows what he wants to do and does it without heed for the conventions of expression! We have a little of the real Hardy already. It is only a little, but it is genuine. In the next poem, "Proud Songsters," the exquisite beauty of the workmanship of the first verse, and the thought that 12 months ago these proud songsters

No finches were, nor nightingales,
Nor thrushes,
But only particles of grain,
And earth, and air, and rain

add to our knowledge and also to our admiration. Next comes "Thoughts at Midnight," and we learn more about the poet's bitterness and anger—the old anger of the thinker against the thoughtless. And then the poem, "I am the One," a wonderful crescendo of affirmation of the poet's unity with birds and beasts and men and the universe. And a page or two later "To Louisa in the Lane" adds that beauty of tenderness in love, of wistfulness and gentleness, which takes away the taste of the bitterness by showing it to be only the other side of an unusually delicate sensibility.

But the fancy that we can build up the Hardy that we know by touch after touch out of these poems is a fancy that cannot be indulged here. His mind and his poetry were too multifarious for such treatment; and he can give three pages to a poem on his own variousness without beginning to get at the core of it. From poetry very patently laboured, like the tiny play about Aristodemus, to a lovely song that seems to sing itself, like the "Song to Aurore"; from little stories in verse, legendary, tragic and what-not, to a long "philosophical fantasy," or the oddest "Drinking Song" that was ever written; from love-songs, or jolly little things like the poem about the merry tramp in the snowstorm to flashes of anger and bitterness, and the agonies of pity; in metres complicated and simple, in lines smooth and rough, in words of stone and words of flame, all his many moods are here, and nearly all of them both mellowed and intensified by his long-brooding memory, and all expressed with that certainty which he wrought out for himself with very little debt to previous poets. To most of his readers his idiom is now so well known as to have lost its initial discomfort without losing any of its quality and effect; and the more his poetry is read the clearer it becomes that he was a poet by inner compulsion; not one who sought the applause of the many, but one whose every mood and observation and thought turned itself, often as it were against his will, into poetry. And the last poem in his last volume sheds a light back upon all the volumes that went before it:—

HE RESOLVES TO SAY NO MORE.

O my soul, keep the rest unknown!
It is too like a sound of moan
When the charnel-eyed
Pale Horse has sighed:
Yea, none shall gather what I hide!

Why load men's minds with more to bear
That bear already ails to spare?
From now alway
Till my last day
What I discern I will not say.

Let Time roll backward if it will;
(Magians who drive the midnight quill
With brain aglow,
Can see it so.)
What I have learnt no man shall know.

And if my vision range beyond
The blinkered sight of souls in bond,
—By truth made free—
I'll let all be,
And show to no man what I see.

"The Evening News" 12. 10. 28

A Bookman's Week

The OLD PESSIMIST and the YOUNG PESSIMIST.

By J. B. PRIESTLEY.

J. B. Priestley

THOMAS HARDY prepared for the Press a last volume of poems, and it now appears as "WINTER WORDS" (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.). In his Introductory Note he grumbles once more because critics and reviewers have found his poetry "gloomy and pessimistic." This is a very odd complaint. Hardy held on to one grim view of this life for over half a century of writing, and was a pessimist in grain. He was so determined to make the worst of everything that he did not mind contradicting himself, sometimes telling us that we are in a universe that is nothing but a machine, and at other times scrapping the machine and putting in its place a malevolent spirit, whose sport it was—and very poor sport too—to drive Wessex young women to the gallows. Why he should have objected to being called a pessimist is a mystery to me. It would have been interesting to have learned his idea of a writer with a really pessimistic outlook. Moreover, Hardy the poet, who thought himself a far better man than Hardy the novelist, should have been the last person to grumble at the critics, for many of them have been pliable enough to take him at his own valuation.

For the last ten years it has been quite the fashion in some circles to pretend that Hardy was more important as a poet—and as a lyrical poet, not simply as the author of "The Dynasts"—than he was as a novelist. This is nonsense, only to be excused as a piece of flattery to an old and very distinguished writer, who had his whims. Hardy is a considerable poet—forceful, original, but horribly uncertain in his handling of words—but he is not a considerable novelist; he is a great novelist, one of the masters. It is amusing to speculate on what some of these critics would have said of these lyrics if they had not had the author of "The Return of the Native" behind them. This posthumous volume is slight, but the mixture is as before. There are poems in it that are as good as a walk in October woods. There are other poems that might have been written in wet clay with a hob-nailed boot. But these are the last words of a great writer; so, however wintry they may be, we ought to cherish them.

"The Nation and Athenaeum" 13. 10. 28

HARDY'S POEMS

Winter Words. By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan. 7s. 6d.)

"So far as I am aware," wrote Thomas Hardy, "I happen to be the only English poet who has brought out a new volume of verse on his . . . birthday"; but he left the number of the birthday blank, and never lived to fill it in. In the short note which follows, he allows a complaint to escape him. His last volume of poems, he says, was pronounced gloomy and pessimistic by reviewers, a verdict which he characterizes as odd. It is evident that he was annoyed by the labels tied on to him, and indeed he can scarcely ever have read a review without such words as pessimism, irony, gloom, springing at him and sticking like burrs to his coat. Perhaps he would have preferred such words as flippant, and farcical, which in this introductory note he applies himself to some of his pieces. And in one short poem, called "Not Known," his irritation appears again:—

"They know the wilings of the world,
The latest flippancy;
They know each jest at hazard hurled,
But know not me.

"They know a phasm they name as me,
In whom I should not find
A single self-held quality
Of body or mind."

It is difficult to blame the critics. The furnishing of Hardy's mind is by now so well known that there is no need to enlarge upon it; it is only necessary to say here that that furnishing remains the same to the end. Carpenters are still making coffins; bastards are still born and furtively disposed of; lovers still fail to coincide; the old romance is still evoked and regretted. "Winter Words," indeed; Hardy's landscape was always wintry; it had more than a nip in it: it had a bite. Even when spring ruled for the moment, we were always conscious that winter was not far behind. The diction, the presentation, matched the season. Stiff, uncomfortable, rheumaticky, it creaked and jerked upon its way. It is probably this inelegant and angular quality of Hardy's diction which has set so many readers' teeth on edge, rather than the sardonic character of his philosophy which has repelled them. Yet, once the taste has been acquired, and the queer infelicities no longer evoke a smile, it becomes apparent that his mind could not have expressed itself in any other manner. So it must be accepted or refused. We may wish that he could have cut some of his favourite words out of his vocabulary; that he could have refrained from writing such lines as:—

"And this afar-noised World perambulate";

but, once our ear is won, we would as willingly eliminate some personal mannerism from the make-up of a familiar friend. He is all of a piece with his diction; it is a close garment that he wears, not a graceful one; and the gestures which it reveals have not only the anchylosis but also the authority of age. With his own Aged Newspaper he might well soliloquize:—

"Yes; yes; I am old. In me appears
The history of a hundred years;
Empires', kings', captives', births and deaths,
Strange faiths, and fleeting shibboleths.
—Tragedy, comedy, throngs my page
Beyond all mummed on any stage:
Cold hearts beat hot, hot hearts beat cold,
And I beat on. Yes; yes; I am old."

V. SACKVILLE-WEST.

lecture notes of a student at a horticultural college, filled out with all—or nearly all—the obvious garden quota-

"The Observer" 21.10.28

"Truth" 17.10.28.

HARDY'S LAST POEMS.

SHORTLY before he died, Thomas Hardy was engaged in revising a volume of his poems for publication, but death intervened before the final revision was complete. These poems, with Hardy's introductory note to them, are now given to the world. In that note he expresses surprise at the imputations of gloom and pessimism charged by the reviewers against the previous poems, when, in his opinion, many of them were flippant, even sometimes farcical. At this surprise of the poet the reader may perhaps himself feel some surprise. Certainly Hardy's flippancy is not as other men's flippancy, nor his farce as other men's farce. He could, it is true, be farcical at times to the point of grotesqueness; but in his most grotesque fancies there is always a certain latent grimness. His playfullest outbursts of humour have always in them an undercurrent of the sardonic. His awareness of the stern, often tragic, thing that is nature and life never deserts him in his lightest moments. The relentless Fates that beset and determine all human existence are as perpetually present to him as they were to Æschylus.

To say that this collection of poems is uneven is merely to say what any truthful critic would have to say of any collection of poems ever published; but Hardy's genius was of the kind that was particularly liable to lapses. In that respect he may be considered to resemble Wordsworth. Different as these two poets were in other respects, they had this in common—namely, a compelling urge to clothe their thoughts and their descriptions in the homely, forceful phrases, and to illustrate them by the homely, forceful images of every day. Both were convinced that what Dr. Johnson once called "library verses" were of no avail. Poetry was an impulse of nature, not an artifice of the writing-table. Readers who are interested in this oft-debated question may find the whole matter very ably discussed by Coleridge in his discriminating defence of Wordsworth. But whatever view of it be taken, the Hardy, like the Wordsworth, method is peculiarly amenable to the operations of the maxim, *corruptio optimi pessima*. When the homely phrase or image hits, it hits the middle of the bull's-eye; when it misses, it misses the whole target. Such misses may be found sprinkled here and there through "Winter Words" (Macmillan. 7s. 6d.). On the other hand, there are some redoubtable hits—such, for instance, as the little poem "Her Second Husband Hears Her Story." If the volume had had nothing else of value in it beyond these twenty lines of poignant, ruthless realism, it would still have been worth while. A lesser poet would have made the sordid tragedy merely pitiful. Hardy has translated it into the realm of the tremendous.

"Time and Tide" 19.10.28

The Heart's Journey

By NAOMI ROYDE-SMITH.

The Heart's Journey. Siegfried Sassoon. (Heinemann 3s. 6d.)
Winter Words. Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan. 7s. 6d.).

It is ten years since Mr. Sassoon dedicated his first book of poems to Thomas Hardy. To-day *The Heart's Journey* lies on my table side by side with *Winter Words*, the volume of poems Hardy had intended to publish on some birthday he did not live to keep. "No harmonious philosophy is attempted in these pages," he wrote in a preface from which, as a man holding back the signature to his will, he omitted the date on which he meant the poems to appear. It would be absurd as well as impertinent to attempt to refute that pronouncement here, or to make this last collection the basis for a considered judgment of Hardy's poetry. The little, tragically-named book re-sounds the authentic notes we have heard and treasured before. The voice is as clear as ever: it is moved to utterance by the same themes: a tramp on the way to the Casual ward wishes him a merry Christmas: a woman in bed with her second husband tells him how her first died there: a father kills the only witness to his daughter's sin. The last line of the last poem in the book runs:—

> Yes. We are getting to the end of dreams!

but out of the familiar themes what lovely new songs may break! There is the pantheistic song beginning

> I am the one whom ringdoves see
> Through chinks in boughs
> When they do not rouse
> In sudden dread,
> But stay on cooing, as if they said:
> "Oh; it's only he."

and on another page is, unique in its gaiety, characteristic in its implications, the delicious "Lodging-House Fuchsias" reaches a perfection that even those who do not relish Hardy's verse must recognise.

> Mrs. Master's fuchsias hung
> Higher and broader, and brightly swung,
> Bell-like, more and more
> Over the narrow garden-path,
> Giving the passer a sprinkle-bath
> In the morning.
>
> She put up with their pushful ways,
> And made us tenderly lift their sprays,
> Going to her door:
> But when her funeral had to pass
> They cut back all the flowery mass
> In the morning.

There is nothing lovelier, nothing more characteristic in the whole book, every page of which holds some poem, some phrase, some line that, as we read it for the first time, recalls other passages coming from the same deep ironic and tender sensibility through which the genius of Thomas Hardy gave us his vision of the world.

HARDY'S LAST POEMS

"Winter Words." By Thomas Hardy. (Macmillan and Co. 7s. 6d.)

(BY OSBERT BURDETT.)

The place of Thomas Hardy among our poets and novelists is far from having been determined. The acclaim that carried the veteran to his rest was an expression of public feeling; it was not, and could not be, the verdict of criticism. We had much amends to make for previous misunderstanding, and the veteran who had survived every attack was felt to have earned our homage. It is said, on good authority, that his first and last love was poetry, that he became a novelist in order to live by his pen, and that he deserted prose narrative (after the outcry that had rewarded him for "Jude the Obscure") with as much relief as regret. "Winter Words," which was to have been published on the birthday that never came, is his express farewell to literature. "He resolves to say no more" is the title of the concluding poem.

***

The poet had a quarrel with the universe for having created beings more sensitive than the force which had evolved them, and with man for having (he thought) misunderstood the poet's comment thereon. In the preface to this last volume, Hardy declares that "no harmonious philosophy is attempted in these pages—or in any bygone pages of mine," disclaims the label of Pessimist, and avers that many "flippant, not to say farcical, pieces" in his previous collections give the lie to such a label. Yet a pessimist may be flippant and farcical. Broadly speaking, a person is called a pessimist who (with or without a sense of humour) is obsessed by the crookedness of things, who never fails to note when expectations are defeated, who believes that the ending of most stories is tragic or unhappy, who inhabits the shadow of suffering, separation, and the grave.

To an alert mind, so preoccupied, there is much irony in the spectacle of human existence, but irony is properly an intellectual, not an imaginative, exercise, and thus the stuff of much of Hardy's poetry is unpoetic. The last volume adds little but bulk to the verse he had written before. There are several little tales in verse; among the best are "The Three Tall Men," "The Brother," "The Single Witness," and "The Wedding Clothes"; but the most interesting are the few in which Hardy seems to speak for himself. "A Private Man on Public Men" nurses his seclusion:—

> Shut from the noise of the world without,
> Hearing but dimly its rush and rout,
> Unenvying those amid its roar,
> Little endowed, not wanting more.

The final poem says that he will keep silent—

> And if my vision range beyond
> The blinkered sight of souls in bond,

and in "Not Known" he again declares that he has been completely misunderstood. Most interesting of all are "A Philosophical Fantasy," in which he declares the Will to be witless and thus not responsible for the tragedy of life, and the more moving, because more musical, "Drinking Song," the original virtue of which is that no drinker will ever wish to sing it. Unlike, in its disillusion, any drinking-song ever written, it takes in turn the "great thoughts" that have proved to be errors, and the chorus after each runs:—

> Fill full your cups: feel no distress
> That thoughts so great should now be less:
>
> 'Tis only one great thought the less.

***

The trouble with Hardy was that he could never forgive the world for clinging to the beliefs that he had ceased to hold. But in his ache at their loss he remained half-at-one with the believers. Thus his poetry is tied to its generation, and as an artist he was rarely detached. His style is crabbed and awkward, and more than a little of it tires. In spite of his many inventions in the stanza, the effect is monotonous, and it seems safe to prophesy that only a selection from his lyrics will endure, and that this will occupy a small corner in English poetry. He wrote verse with something of the hesitancy of a countryman, and the unit of sense and sound did not usually tally. His keen eye loved to concentrate on details which his imagination magnified into monstrous size. He is the poet of the Darwinian reaction, and under its shadow his imagination was clipped of its wings. To see the flights of which they were capable we need a varied and impartial selection from his best verse.

"John O' London's Weekly" 27.10.28
(review by Edward Shanks)

TWO things are striking in Thomas Hardy's preface to the posthumous volume of his poems, "Winter Words" (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.). One is his declaration that he happens to be "the only English poet who has brought out a new volume of his verse on his . . . birthday." He left the number blank, uncertain apparently whether the book would be ready for his seventy-eighth, or perhaps not until his eightieth, anniversary, and the mere fact shows his unbounded attachment to life. The other is a protest against the reviewers who found his last collection "wholly gloomy and pessimistic."

Hardy's attachment to life.

These two things go together. He was attached to life because he loved it, and no man who does that can be called a pessimist. Hardy certainly dealt in a murderous gloom, but one nevertheless derives from his poetry the virtue which impelled him to write it—a robust, powerful, and invigorating acceptance of the things that happen. He thought that tragedy best displayed both the variety of life and the strength of man, and he rejoiced in the strength of man, as he rejoiced in his own strength that enabled him to master tragedy by poetry. Something of his attitude can be seen in one of these new poems—"After the Death of a Friend":—

You died and made but little of it!—
Why then should I, when called to doff it,
Drop and renounce this worm-holed raiment,
Shrink edgewise off from its grey claimant?
Rather say, when I am Time-outrun,
As you did: Take me, and have done,
Inexorable, insatiate one!

For him when death threatened there was to be neither weak resignation nor cowardly repining, only stern and manly acceptance of the stern, inevitable fact. The poems in this book, like all those that went before, are to be read in this light, by which we can see what Hardy meant when he said he was not a pessimist.

"The Nation" 4. 11. 28

POETRY

WINTER WORDS in Various Moods and Metres. By THOMAS HARDY. (Macmillan 7/6).

"Winter Words" begins with an introductory note, one with a blank, as you shall see, that Hardy was to fill in at a later date. This is the note, or the beginning of it: "So far as I am aware, I happen to be the only English poet who has brought out a new volume of his verse on his . . . birthday, whatever may have been the case with the ancient Greeks, for it must be remembered that poets did not die young in those days." So—the book was to come out on Hardy's birthday, his next probably; and then he died. He must not seldom have had the thought of his death in his mind, while he wrote these winter words; for he was nearer ninety than eighty at the end. The first poem in the book, indeed, is an expression of what must often be an old man's wonder:—why he should have been left, when so many younger were taken. It is a dialogue between the poet and a new day:

What are you doing outside my walls,
O Dawn of another day?
I have not called you over the edge
Of the heathy ledge,
So why do you come this way,
With your furtive footstep without sound here,
And your face so deedily gray?

"I show a light for killing the man
Who lives not far from you,
And for bringing to birth the lady's child,
Nigh domiciled,
And for earthing a corpse or two,
And for several other such odd jobs round here
That Time to-day must do.

"But you he leaves alone although,
As you have often said,
You are always ready to pay the debt
You don't forget
You owe for board and bed:)
The truth is, when men willing are found here
He takes those loth instead."

Was Hardy, then, willing to go, when he was left on earth and younger men were taken? One thinks so. There has been a recurring note in the earlier volumes, poem after poem speaking of some woman lost to him in a dead time. One poem said that he never could pass a slate quarry without thinking of a woman that he had once seen, or had first seen, against the background of one. He wanted to know about her, about her and others: he wanted to *know*. Now the marvel is that this same man who had so often in his mind the thought of his own death, this wish to get beyond the grave and *know*, should have, as the second poem in his winter words, one that expresses a man's marvel at the miracle that new life is to any reflecting man. The poem is called "Proud Songsters."

The thrushes sing as the sun is going,
And the finches whistle in ones and pairs
And as it gets dark loud nightingales
In bushes
Pipe, as they can when April wears,
As if all Time were theirs.

These are brand new birds of twelve months' growing,
Which a year ago, or less than twain,
No finches were, nor nightingales,
Nor thrushes,
But only particles of grain,
And earth, and air, and rain.

That might have been written by a man of twenty-five; a man of genius of that age, it is true. A poem here and there belongs to an older time: this one, for instance, is given as from a notebook of 1868:

When the maiden leaves off teasing,
Then the man may leave off pleasing:
Yea 'tis sign,
Wet or fine
She will love him without ceasing
With a love there's no appeasing.
Is it so?
Ha-ha. Ho!

The man may leave off pleasing; but better not to

"Life and Letters" November, 1928.

Winter Words, by Thomas Hardy. (*Macmillan. 7s. 6d.*) This is not the place to canvass Thomas Hardy's merits as a poet, and of the present volume I must be content with remarking that, while the larger number of poems printed here were presumably written during the last half-dozen years of his life, it also includes verses dated as early as 1901, thrown in, no doubt, by way of make-weight—which is a pity since it detracts from the effect of the whole. Still, what an extraordinary old age!—the same ungainly, plodding, vigorous measures, the same abrupt felicities, the same immense, all-pervading atmosphere of gloom: *Winter Words* issuing out of a wintry landscape or the dankest period of early spring, yellow leaves flattened in the mud and the mist clinging along the newly turned-up earth of the furrows. The poet himself, just as Max Beerbohm drew him, perambulates briskly enough with his waterproof and sturdy-looking unfurled umbrella and pauses to notice a crocus in the hedge; he notices, too, that, behind the hedge, some farmer, as farmers will, has left one of his dead lambs to rot under the open sky. A nauseating stench, which he doesn't much relish, it is true; I am not quite sure, on the other hand, that he positively dislikes it.

lecture notes of a student at a horticultural college, filled out with all—or nearly all—the obvious garden quota

"The Daily Herald" 9.11.28

THOMAS HARDY'S LAST POEMS

Reviewed by ARTHUR SYMONS

Winter Words in Various Moods and Metres, by Thomas Hardy. Macmillan, 7s. 6d.

This book has many touches in it of that genius which in Hardy rarely flagged. I saw him for the last time on his eightieth birthday: the same perplexed face, the same vitality, and the same sardonic humour; and I find before me a poem on his birthday, as of one "who never expected much." Certainly the world kept faith with him.

In one of these curious poems he tries to explain himself, the various stages of his life, and every stage shows a different aspect of that self no human being ever knew—one's inscrutable Self. This stanza gives one of his aspects I know best:

You entertained a person once,
Whom you internally deemed a dunce:
As he sat in view
Just facing you
You saw him through.

The Clasped Skeletons has a lovely lilt, and this lilt and the subject he has chosen remind me of one of Villon's ballads, and there is much the same refrain:

Bien est eureux qui riens n y'a.
Cleopatra with Antony,
Resigned to dalliance sheer,
Lay, fatuous he, insatiate she,
Long after you'd lain here.

Gallant's Song—1868, has some of that jewel-like quality I find in Beaumont's

Shake off your heavy trance.
When the Maiden leaves off teasing
Then the Man may leave off pleasing:
Yea, 'tis sign,
Wet or fine,
She will love him without ceasing
With a love there's no appeasing.
Is it so?
Ha, ha, ho.

One of the most characteristic poems in the book is named, "I Looked Back." This has some of the quaint melody of Sir Walter Raleigh: the house, the feast, the maid, and all these are omens, like Raleigh's, which are: the Wood, the Weed, the Wag. His last lines are:

It frets the hinter, and it chokes the child.
God bless the Child.

This is Hardy's:

Anon I reasoned there had been,
Ere quite forsaken was each spot,
Bygones wherson I'd lastly seen
That house, that feast, the maid forgot:
But when? Ah, I remembered not.

And I, before I say, "*Ave atque Vale*," am impelled to give this final sentence of Hardy's: "This being possibly my last appearance on the literary stage, I would say, more seriously, that though alas, it would be idle to pretend that the publication of these poems can have much interest for me, the track having been adventured so many times before to-day, the pieces themselves have been prepared with reasonable care, if not quite with the zest of a young man new to print."

"The Poetry Review" November-December 1928

The last poem in *Winter Words* (Macmillan, 7s. 6d.) is fitly entitled, "He resolves to say no more," beginning with this apostrophe:

"O my soul, keep the rest unknown!
It is too like a sound of moan,
When the charnel eyed
Pale Horse has nighed:
Yea, none shall gather what I made!"

This is both characteristic and true of Mr. Hardy. He already has many imitators, but none is equal to him, and we are not likely to hear his like again. The poems in this last volume are distinctly of his peculiar genre, of the significance of which our penetrating contributor, Professor Olivero, will have something to say in the next issue of THE POETRY REVIEW, in an exhaustive article on "The Poetry of Thomas Hardy," which we believe would have pleased and satisfied the poet. In his short introductory note to this last volume he says that he "did not suppose that the licensed tasters had wilfully misrepresented" his previous volume, "knowing well that they could not have read it." We know that Dr. Olivero has read and re-read most carefully all the published work of this peculiar and perverse literary genius.

"The Landmark" Vol. X No. 12. 1928.

POETS AND PLAYWRIGHTS

By ST. JOHN ADCOCK

GREATLY as I admire the novels of Thomas Hardy, I have never been able to feel more than a qualified admiration of his poetry. Again and again, I have seen what seemed to me some of his most commonplace verse quoted by certain critics with extravagant praise, and have had to console myself by coming to the conclusion that there must be something wrong either with those eulogists or with me. His verse is always interesting; it is always the expression of an original and forceful personality; always clothes a thought, an idea, but often does not clothe it with the language of poetry, and sometimes there is no poetry even in the idea. I may be mistaken, but I still think that, whether it is written in classical metres or in free verse, poetry cannot be divorced from music and beauty of phrase, unless the idea in it is great enough to assert its greatness, whatever rags it may wear.

There is nothing of Hardy's best in his posthumous volume, "Winter Words," but nothing that is not strongly characteristic of him. Here and there are tender, wistful, poignant or passionate things, but they are generally marred by laboriousness of movement or an incongruous use of words. I can make clear what I mean by quoting from Hardy and from Hood. Here is the opening of Hardy's "The Woman who went East":

"Where is that woman of the west,
Good Sir, once friends with me,
In rays of her own rareness drest,
And fired by sunset from the sea?
Yes, she—once friends with me.

"—She went to sojourn in the east,
O stranger Dame, one day;
Her own west land she reckoned least
Of all lands, with its weird old way,
So left it, Dame, one day."

The woman who had gone east with a new lover has returned in her old age, and is addressing her old lover who does not recognise her. Here is how Hood tells of the going away of the girl who had left her old lover for a new:

"O saw ye not fair Ines?
She's gone into the West,
To dazzle when the sun is down,
And rob the world of rest:

THE POETRY OF HARDY

BEAUTY is the living spirit of Thomas Hardy's work, both in verse and in prose: it shines through his characters, it glows in his images, it burns in his passion. Everywhere, throughout his novels, tales, lyrics, dramas, there breathes an aura of wonder, romance;—as always in true works of art life seems to put on an unearthly shape. His figures belong to eternity. As Blake says: "Nature has no supernatural, and dissolves; imagination is eternity." Hardy perceives in life a sorrowful loveliness; and his mind endows it with a new, original charm—original because he finds out and hears the yet uncaught melodies of life—strange harmonies, and still—though dimly, unconsciously, even unwillingly felt—unmistakable and true.

He looks into present life, in his novels and poems—or into the dusk of years, as in *The Dynasts*, or even into legendary love—as in *The Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall*—and in all these enigmatic loves and hates, in this bravery and treachery, in this bold defiance and fear, he tries to read the runes of destiny and interpret them. He stands perplexed. Silent are the Heavens to his anxious soul. There is a shadow on his spiritual landscape, a weird cloud is brooding over his thought—the thought of a mind in pain, agony, despair. Life is reflected in his work as in a black obsidian mirror. A sense of doom is always weighing upon him, upon his personages. He is walking along forbidding ways, through shuddering woods, in a black frost; it is a maze of dreariness and desolation, he goes on in depression and anguish, and every step but leads him deeper and deeper into the labyrinth, among the black mirrors of blind pools, utterly alone, on an unknown star. His soul is confronted by the unknowable, his look cannot pierce through the web of life, is baffled by the intricacy of the mysterious ways of God. While to the believer a spiritual light illumines with jewelled rays the whole frame of things, from atom to star, from the clod to where suns are born and die, there is no gleam of truth for the thinker without the aid of Revelation. Death does not count much

A NOTE ON THE GENIUS OF THOMAS HARDY.*

WHY is it that there are so few novels which can be read twice, while all good poetry can be read over and over? Is it something inherent in the form, one of the reasons in nature why a novel cannot be of the same supreme imaginative substance as a poem? I think it is, and that it will never be otherwise. But, among novels, why is it that one here and there calls us back to its shelf with almost the insistence of a lyric, while for the most part a story read is a story done with? Balzac is always good to re-read, but not Tolstoi: and I couple two of the giants. To take lesser artists, I would say that we can re-read "Lavengro" but not "Romola". But what seems puzzling is that Hardy, who is above all a story-teller, and whose stories are of the kind that rouse suspense and satisfy it, can be read more than once, and never be quite without novelty. There is often, in his books, too much story, as in "The Mayor of Casterbridge", where the plot extends into almost inextricable entanglements; and yet that is precisely one of the books that can be re-read. Is it on account of that concealed poetry, never absent though often unseen, which gives [illegible] histories a meaning beyond the [illegible] beneath it like an under-current, [illegible] atmosphere? Facts, once known, are [illegible] stories of mere action gallop through the brain and are gone; but in Hardy there is a vision or interpretation, a sense of life as a growth out of the earth, and as much a mystery between soil and sky as the corn is, which will draw men back to the stories with an interest which outlasts their interest in the story.

* "The Wessex Novels. Volume I. Tess of the D'Urbervilles." Macmillan's Pocket Hardy. London: Macmillan. 1906.

It is a little difficult to get accustomed to Hardy, or to do him justice without doing him more than justice. He is always right, always a seer, when he is writing about "the seasons in their moods, morning and evening, night and noon, winds in their different tempers, trees, waters and mists, shades and silences, and the voices of inanimate things". (What gravity and intimacy in his numbering of them!) He is always right, always faultless in matter and style, when he is showing that "the impressionable peasant leads a larger, fuller, more dramatic life than the pachydermatous king". But he requires a certain amount of emotion to shake off the lethargy natural to his style, and when he has merely a dull fact to mention he says it like this: "He reclined on his couch in the sitting-room, and extinguished the light". In the next sentence, where he is interested in expressing the impalpable emotion of the situation, we get the faultless and uncommon use of words: "The night came in, and took up its place there, unconcerned and indifferent; the night which had already swallowed up his happiness, and was now digesting it listlessly; and was ready to swallow up the happiness of a thousand other people with as little disturbance or change of mien."

No one has ever studied so scrupulously as Hardy the effect of emotion on inanimate things, or has ever seen emotion so visually in people. For instance: "Terror was upon her white face as she saw it; her cheek was flaccid, and her mouth had almost the aspect of a round little hole." But so intense is his preoccupation with these visual effects that he sometimes cannot resist noting a minute appearance, though in the very moment of assuring us that the person looking on did not see it. "She hardly observed that a tear descended slowly upon his cheek, a tear so large that it magnified the pores of the skin over which it rolled, like the object lens of a microscope." And it is this power of seeing to excess, and being limited to sight which is often strangely revealing, that leaves him at times helpless before the naked words that a situation supremely seen demands for its completion. The one failure in what is perhaps his masterpiece, "The Return of the Native", is in the words put into the mouth of Eustacia and Yeobright in the perfectly imagined scene before the mirror, a scene which should be the culminating scene of the book; and it is, all but the words: the words are crackle and tinsel.

What is it, then, that makes up the main part of the value and fascination of Hardy, and how is it that what at first seem, and may well be, defects, uncouthnesses, bits of formal preaching, grotesque ironies of event and idea, come at last to seem either good in themselves or good where they are, a part of the man if not of the artist? One begins by reading for the story, and the story is of an attaching interest. Here is a story-teller of the good old kind, a story-teller whose plot is enough to hold his readers. With this point no doubt many readers stop and are content. But go on, and next after the story-teller one comes on the philosopher. He is dejected and a little sinister, and may check your pleasure in his narrative if you are too attentive to his criticism of it. But a new meaning comes into the facts as you observe his attitude towards them, and you may be well content to stop and be fed with thoughts by the philosopher. But if you go further still you will find, at the very last, the poet, and you need look for nothing beyond. I am inclined to question if any novelist has been more truly a poet without ceasing to be in the true sense a [illegible]. The poetry of Hardy's novels is a poetry of [illegible] it is a voice of the earth. He seems often to be closer to the earth (which is at times, as in "The Return of the Native", the chief person, or the chorus, of the story) than to men and women, and to see more [illegible] women out of the eyes of wild creatures, and [illegible] the weeds and stones of the heath. How often, and for how profound a reason, does he not show us to ourselves, not as we or our fellows see us, but out of the continual observation of humanity which goes on in the wary and inquiring eyes of birds, the meditative and indifferent regard of cattle, and the deprecating aloofness and inspection of sheep?

ARTHUR SYMONS.

A POCKET HARDY.

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES, in the Pocket Hardy. London, Macmillan. 2s. 6d. and 3s. 6d. net.

By C. Lewis Hind. .....

But the flashes of reality and beauty! How many they are!

You could sometimes see her tortoise gone in her cheeks, or her ninth sparkling from her eyes. The occasional heave of the wind between the sigh of some immense and cool contemplation with the universe in space, and with history in time.

Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive?

Previsioned by suffering.

I don't mind that; no woman does when it comes to agony-point, and there's no other way.

The Happy Word.

How refreshing, too, is his use of words that are not worn by constant traffic—"accusatory horror"; "the ironical Tishbite"; "a plume of smoke"; "grassed down and forgotten"; "the stopt-diapason note"; "an untenable redemptive theolatry"; "the geocentric view of things"; "boreal light"; "autochthonous idlers"; and many more.

What a life's work is here. Creator of Eustacia Vye; author of the Poems; of "The Dynasts"; of "Tess"; and of that [illegible] and haunting study of the unspeakable and that the artistic temperament [illegible] "The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved."

[illegible] the author of "Tess" [illegible]

I see that Observer [illegible] is a large building, in every room of which is life in flux and flow, the little [illegible] troubles of the heart fattening [illegible] tion and cruelty, joy, [illegible] the other happenings of [illegible] or bedside. And all the while the [illegible] growls monotonously, sometimes [illegible] head, when the folk at the [illegible] and are frightened. The Observer knows all, sees all, and writes on. Sometimes [illegible] out, and cries at the street corner, "Little children, love one another." Another murmurs, "Fear not, little flock." The Observer dockets the interruptions, and writes on.

12 Jan. 1907

(Continued at

with him; the greatest reality is pain, and it arouses the main problem of life: why was man born to suffer? And not only this question, but a deeper one looms out of his dark meditation: has this cry of pain an empty resonance? For the mystic, every sorrow, insult, offence, "the slings and arrows" of the world, will be, when suffered with patience, refulgent gems in his future crown. But what are they to the agnostic poet? Cruel blows, blindly given; who gets them, so much the worse for him. The supreme bitterness of his outlook is summed up in Tristram's dying words: "Nor life nor death is worth a special quest."[1] For Hardy, the soul has no whither; and yet we feel that in all its wanderings and strayings his mind is looking for an eternal daystar and an everlasting sea—the star of Divine Love—the sea of Infinity, we perceive that he is searching to find out the moral significance of actions —is longing for rest after failure and disappointment—and that in his winter afternoon of driving rain and gusty wind there is an anxious glimmer of a serene, radiant heaven beyond the gloomy sky.

His aim is to express the pathos of life; and he strives to work into his phrase, with the utmost precision, sincerely, plainly, his thought and his emotion. He is master of a verse in which the music is less explicit than in the lines of other poets, yet is clearly felt; although there are harsh inflexions in his voice, there is a singing in his verse. He is a follower of Wordsworth in so much that he does not look for ornate words, but uses a plain, everyday language. There is a kind—if I may call it so—of *rough preciousness* in his form. Never is it common or vulgar, though often hard; still, when we listen carefully to his wistful airs, we notice, even in the apparently inharmonious passages, that a melody resounds above the grating whisper of the line. Certainly, however, we rarely feel the incantation of a verse, as we do in W. B. Yeats or A. Symons. Perhaps he was—to use a phrase of Francis Thompson—"over-deliberate in expression." While he aims at the most expressive sim-

[1] Thomas Hardy, *The Famous Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall*, London, Macmillan, 1926, p. 77.

The Poetry Review January-February 1929.

plicity, at an utmost sincerity to mood, emotion, sensation —and often attains it—with precise and unusual epithets, with a forcible use of idiomatic speech, yet now and then the voice of passion is clogged by the heaviness of stress, by touches of crudity; not seldom does he sacrifice the accent of rhythm to the accent of sense; and therefore he fails to translate his feeling into lyrical music. His ideal of perfection in style is a close truth to nature, but without excluding imagination; on the contrary the imaginative faculty plays a predominant part in his poetical compositions; he is highly passionate in his treatment of homely subjects; common, everyday life is transfigured by a peculiar magic, by a fantastic ardour. Nevertheless, we do not find the true lyric rapture in several of these poems; they are full of strange meditation, of deep thought; but is thought set to a tune—as it always ought to be in a poem—or does it simply remain an idea expressed in clear, stern words? When he blends intellectual vision to inmost music he reaches his highest power, which is a kind of mournful ecstasy.

They are songs of thwarted love, of love long dead, of fickle passion, of cruel playing of fate with suffering hearts; hence the intense emotional quality of his verse, hence it is why threadbare words are surrounded by an atmosphere of haunting suggestion, hence, also—although rather often his lines are clumsy and do not soar, entangled by a laboured phraseology—the moving power of these poems, born of an unsparing sincerity in thought and expression. In simple, but all significant phrases—in a form shorn of ornament, but moulded into poetical expression by a rare metrical skill—he reveals to us his inmost heart. We recognize in his lyrics a mastery in shaping the language to his need, in a rude way, as a man hammering iron rods into twisted rings and volutes, with a strong hand and sure blows. The long and minute analyses of feeling in his novels are here condensed in vivid flashes. A careful artist, working on a genuine impulse, he endeavours to express the motions of his soul with literal accuracy; there are no ornaments of conventional form in his lines; and, in spite of twists of

language and of strained and tormented utterance, they keep the freshness of improvisation.

He uses the traditional patterns of metre, in a great variety of forms; in *The Dynasts* blank verse alternates with the lyrical measures of the choruses; in his poems we notice several kinds of strophes: tercets, octosyllabic quatrains, five-line stanzas; some lyrics are in long, slow-swinging, twelve-beat verses, some in very short lines.[1] We find sonnets and ballads. He employs but sparely the refrain; he produces subtle effects with sudden changes in the rhythmical movement; and his choice of the metre always appears happy and spontaneous; it seems to be prompted—inevitably—by the subject itself. We feel now and then the bondage of rhyming, the halting of the line hampered by the fetters of rhythm, the awkward fall of some cadences, an effort in the lyric phrase almost as if he spoke an unfamiliar language. In *The Dynasts*, his line reminds us of Milton's in its concentration of thought, its careful construction, its austere harmony.

He does not seem to care about form, and yet he is never indifferent to technical beauty. A conscious and deliberate artist—at his happiest when employing a simple and lucid language and a plain syntax—he achieves the precise effect he wants to produce with a fine sense of the value of words and their arrangement. There is no dissonance between sound and feeling, meaning and measure. Though he may sometimes appear clumsy and uncouth, and to work with such abrupt touches that several of his poems retain on their surface the marks of the chisel, his lyrics have a peculiar finish and an individual character; though elliptical, his form is never vague or meaningless.

The impression is conveyed to us in a novel form, queer, yet never artificial, with a bold energy, a spontaneous ingenuity:

> " The swallows flew *in the curves of an eight*
> Above the river-gleam
> In the wet June's last beam;—

[1] Thomas Hardy, *Collected Poems*, " *The Burghers*," p. 20; " *The Homecoming*," p. 234; " *Had you wept*," p. 357; " *Lonely Days*, " p. 617.

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Planing up shavings of crystal spray
A moor-hen darted out
From the bank thereabout,
And through the stream-shine *ripped* his way." [1]

His poetic diction is unadorned, yet never common; in spite of his apparent homeliness of speech, in his treatment of diction he strongly deviates from ordinary usage; there is a kind of awkward straightforwardness in his address.

Not seldom there is in his work a stern beauty, resulting from the bold strength with which content-matter, feeling, and phrase are shaped, with a sure, exultant touch, into verse, as in :

At whiles or short or long,
May be discerned *a wrong*
Dying as of self-slaughter; whereat I
Would raise my voice in song.

We perceive his mastery in word-painting in some fine rendering of the scenery in *The Dynasts;* for instance, in the view of the battlefield of Austerlitz or in the description of the prisoners in the marshes of the Island of Walcheren :

> " Lit by the low sunshine of an evening in late summer; the horizontal rays from the west lie *in yellow sheaves* across the vapours that the day's heat has drawn from the sweating soil;—*brass-hued* and *opalescent* bubbles, compounded of many gases, rise where passing feet have trodden the damper spots; at night the place is the haunt of the Jack-lantern." [2]

The few details he picks out blend into one vivid impression

But far more wonderful are some word-pictures in his novels, which come to us with the surprise of unexpected beauty—the scene, deep-mirrored in the poet's heart, being rendered with a concise and suggestive style, creating an exquisite emotional effect in trained sensibilities. Thus in *Far from the Madding Crowd* :

> " The strange, luminous semi-opacities of fine autumn afternoons and eves intensified into Rembrandt effects the few yellow sunbeams which came through the holes and divisions in the canvas, and spirited like gems of gold dust across the dusky blue

[1] Thomas Hardy, *Collected Poems*, London, Macmillan, 1923; " *Overlooking the River Stour*," p. 452.
[2] Thomas Hardy, *The Dynasts*, London, Macmillan, 1924, p. 250.

atmosphere of haze pervading the tent, until they alighted in inner surfaces of cloth opposite and shone like little lamps suspended there."

He is particularly happy in evoking the expression of a visage with odd and striking similes :

" Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove
Over tedious riddles solved years ago ! " [1]

" The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing
Alive enough to have strength to die ; "

" And a grin of bitterness swept thereby
Like an ominous bird a-wing."

Very often an idea is shaped into an image, presented to us with admirable directness and made visible to the inward eye with increased intensity. Thus in *Old Furniture* :

" I see the hands of the generations
That owned each shiny familiar thing
In play on its knobs and indentations,
And with its ancient fashioning
Still dallying :

Hands behind hands, growing paler and paler,
As in a mirror a candle-flame
Shows images of itself, each frailer
As it recedes, though the eye may frame
Its shapes the same." [2]

In some descriptive passages, as in:

" And the sun was white, as though chidden of God." [p. 9.]

"The spray sprang up across the cusps of the moon,
And all its light loomed green
As a witch-flame's weirdsome sheen
At the minute of an incantation scene ;
And it greened our gaze—that night at demilune ; " [3]

we recognize the influence of Browning, a poet with whom he shares a predilection for direct, idiomatic utterance and an apparent carelessness in the shaping of the lyrical phrase. A strong, imaginative power blends with strict realism in such pictures as *Snow* :

[1] *Collected Poems, Wessex Poems, " Neutral Tones,"* p. 9.
[2] id., *Moments of Vision*, p. 456.
[3] *Human Shows*, London, Macmillan, 1927, p. 178.

" Every branch *big* with it
Bent every twig with it;
Every fork like a white web-foot;
Some flakes have lost their way, and *grope back upward*, when
Meeting those *meandering* down they *turn* and descend again."
[*id.*, p. 69.]

A fantastic weirdness predominates in:

" I view the evening bonfires of the sun
On hills where morning rains have hissed;
The eyeless countenance of the mist
Pallidly rising when the summer droughts are done." [*id.*, p. 43.]

while a striking exactness, obtained by a bold and vigorous use of language, appears in:

" On the frigid face of the heath-hemmed pond
There shaped the half-grown moon:—
And the wind flapped the moon in its float on the pool,
And stretched it to oval form;
Then corkscrewed it like a wriggling worm;
Then wanned it weariful." [*id.*, p. 29.]

Some lines from his Italian sketches well illustrate the exactness of his word-painting I alluded to just now, which brings out the characteristic features of each place; from " Torino's track " he reaches " multimarbled Genoa ";

" Out from *a deep-delved way* my vision lit
On housebacks pink, green, ochreous—
Where *a slit*
Shoreward 'twixt row and row revealed *the classic blue* through it; "

of the eternal city he says:

" These *umbered cliffs* and *gnarls of masonry*
Outskeleton Time's central city—
Whereof each arch, entablature, and dome
Lies bare in all *its gaunt anatomy.*" [1]

An artist constantly in direct contact with country life, he can draw from it images highly original in their simplicity; this may be seen in some of his tropes, as in the simile—gorgeous in its rusticity—he employs for Shakespeare:

[1] *Collected Poems, Poems of Pilgrimage,* " *Genoa and the Mediterranean,*" p. 91—" *Rome, Building a New Street in the Ancient Quarter,*" p. 93

"So, like a strange bright bird we sometimes find
To mingle with the barn-door brood awhile,
Then vanish from their homely domicile—
Into man's poesy, we wot not whence,
Flew thy strange mind,
Lodged there a radiant guest, and sped for ever thence." [1]

He condenses his bitter views on love and life in these sour madrigals, in these lyrics poignant with sharp irony, short and eloquent like epitaphs, often aiming at dramatic effects, surrounding these tragedies, told with epigrammatic brevity, with an imaginative atmosphere. A characteristic example is *Seen by the Waits*:

"Through snowy woods and shady
We went to play a tune
To the lonely manor-lady
By the light of the Christmas moon.
We violed, till, upward glancing
To where a mirror leaned,
It showed her airily dancing,
Deeming her movements screened.
She had learnt—we heard when homing—
That her roving spouse was dead:
Why she danced in the gloaming
We thought but never said." [1]

Of this sarcastic character are most poems in *Time's Laughing-Stocks*, a series of bitter anecdotes, sometimes accompanied by a cynical moralizing. While in his former lyrics we often meet with a sense of pity, with a sensitive and restrained form and an elegiac tone, we only find here the sheer brutality of statement, the direct utterance answering sharply to the directness of thought and emotion. In the following poem a melancholy smile, half-humorous and yet infinitely sad, lightens up the psychological background.

"That love's dull smart distressed my heart
He shrewdly learnt to see,
But that I was in love with a dead man
Never suspected he.
He searched for the trace of a pictured face,
He watched each missive come—

[1] *id.*, *Satires of Circumstance*, p. 370.

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He dogged my feet to the city street,
He followed me to the sea,
But not to the nigh still churchyard
Did he dream of following me."[1]

This vision of a love rooted in pain and error, and yet constant and enduring, may be contrasted to the conception in another piece,[2] a lyric woven with fine metrical skill, where Echo holds up her musical mirror to the poet's passionate questionings, showing him the anxious faces of his illusions in black aureoles of despair, pointing out to him inevitable wrongs and mistakes that are beyond the power of wisdom, revealing to him with the reverberations of his own words the future veiled from his sight, and thus stirring up a fear and horror of love :

How much shall I love her?
For life, or not long?
Not long.
Alas! When forget her?
For years, or by June?
By June.
And whom woo I after?
No one, or a throng?
A throng.
Of these shall I wed one
Long hence, or quite soon?
Quite soon.
And which will my bride be?
The right or the wrong?
The wrong.
And my remedy—what kind?
Wealth-wove, or earth-hewn?
Earth-hewn.

The idea that life beyond the grave endures only by the power of love is finely expressed in the lines bearing the title *Her Immortality*;[3] the woman lives on solely by the remembrance of the poet, whose longing keeps her shade in the world of the living; her spiritual shape does not exist in an eternal springtide, but it lingers in the loving

[1] *id., Satires of Circumstance, "Her Secret,"* p. 343.
[2] *Human Shows, "The Echo-elf Answers,"* p. 201.
[3] *Collected Poems, Wessex Poems,* pp. 48-50.

ecstasy of the poet, like a flame within a flame, the wedded soul shares the man's own life, breathing, so to say, with him, and will fade away for ever at his death.

> " Upon a noon I pilgrimed through
> A pasture—
> Unto the place where last I saw
> My dead Love's living smile.
> I lay and thought; and in a trance
> She came and stood thereby.—
> ' A Shade but in its mindful ones
> Has immortality;
> By living, me you keep alive,
> By dying you slay me ' ;—
> When I surcease,
> Through whom alone lives she,
> Her spirit ends its living lease,
> Never again to be."

In *The Dynasts* he sums up and expounds, more clearly and explicitly than elsewhere in his work, his conception of the universe. He tries to search the dim infinities of space and time to find the Beginning and the Cause, the inexhaustible source of Life, the Power who creates and destroys—he endeavours to discover the reason of the immutable Law, eternal, divine, and gazes intently into the tumult and splendour of life, yearning to read its secret. The plan of the tragedy is to show, focused in a momentous time in the history of the world—Napoleon's triumph and downfall—a representative image of human life and of the plan of the universe. It is a cosmic view, his thought winging its vertiginous flight through interstellar spaces; yet he *will not* see how stars keep their lawful orbits, he closes his inward eye to the magnificence of Order in the Creation. Like Schopenhauer, he feels that there is a power, an inscrutable force, ruling spirit and matter, an Immanent Will, a Will to Live, even if living implies suffering—a blind Impulse craving to manifest itself in a shifting *Vorstellung* or Representation, through all beings, through all worlds and times. Yet no design, no preconceived plan of the universe is apparent. On the contrary, he sees, with Schopenhauer, that the very essence

of life is at strife with itself; and that only renunciation can give rest to the living being. And, inevitably, there comes a sense of horror in this contemplation, as in the conception of some cruel, monstrous cosmogony of ancient India.

The dramatis personæ are historical personages and abstract entities; the latter are symbolic; the Spirit of the Years, of the inevitable course of fate as manifested in events—the Pities, of the poet's compassion for human sorrow—the Spirit Sinister, of a cruel joy in evil. Over the whole universe there broods the shadow of the Immanent Will. The stage is decked for tragedy; all Europe in the throes of death is spread before us; above it, the supernatural beings, watching, more or less impassive, the doings and sufferings of men; the background is a tapestry woven of blood and tears, of thwarted hopes and despair. Like Goethe's *Faust*, it is an epic conception in dramatic form; the grandeur of the play comes from the inner conception rather than from the outward form.

The way Hardy draws Napoleon's figure is rather questionable; he seems to minimize his gifts, his genius; with a deeper insight Manzoni, in his beautiful ode, pointed out his superior mind as one which the Almighty Giver "stamped with a larger imprint of His creating spirit." Forgetting his undaunted heart and his love for his country, Hardy shows him worn with vain endeavour, blind to any lofty ideal, intent only to work out a sordid plan of conquest. He does not, however, forget his genius in strategy and the arts of war.[1]

"As the play stands," says Bennecke, "it is dramatically a small formal unit, but ethically a headless torso."[2] Yet,

[1] *Chorus of the Years:*
Recording Angel, trace
This bold campaign his thought has spun apace—
One that bids fair for immortality
Among the earthlings—
It will be called . . .
A model for the tactics of all time;
"The Great Campaign of that so famed year Five,"
By millions of mankind not yet alive.

[2] *Thomas Hardy*, p. 236.

although his thought is in the main, destructive, he cannot cancel the eternal moral law printed in our soul, he cannot wipe out of our heart the heavenly luminous writing: *signasti super nos lumen tuum.* In spite of his agnostic conception of life, he must admit a moral ground—must distinguish between sin and purity, righteousness and crookedness, cruelty and mercy. The sense of right and wrong cannot be stifled; in vain some thinkers tried to go "beyond good and evil"; Nietzsche's mind broke down in the attempt. Yet, what is the Immanent Will but a conception prompted by his subconscious feeling of God? His soul, confronted by the Incomprehensible, is bound to admit—if reluctantly—a Power supreme, a supreme Wisdom that does not ask approval of the mind of man. Although he is far from the belief in a Heavenly Father, in God's redeeming Love, he cannot but feel a mystic Presence in the world, among men, in his own soul—cannot but behold visions of mercies and charities. Even while his mind is caught in many a subtle snare, woven by pride, and is entangled in doubts while searching the inviolate Sanctities, he must needs feel the mysterious ruling forces like the rushing of invisible mighty wings; even while listening to the wailings and moanings of the world's perennial agony, he cannot help perceiving—if faintly—the unity of God's design; on earth he *must* see it, and in the spaces all around it, in the mighty streams of stars. Against the grim background of fate his vision of life—a vision of flaming passion and sorrow—stands out, illuminated by a mysterious glow. The world is like a bleak spring day—bleak—yet, of spring. At times we hear in his lines an elusive chanting, as of joy trembling in tears. He would fain believe in a future happiness for the world, but cannot descry any sign of it; still, there is a glimmer of hope in the songs of the Pities, there are dawning splendours in their voices. He cannot believe in a final disaster; and in these songs he expresses a vague, tremulous hope of man's advancement and betterment, a spiritual sunrise heralding peace and happiness. A radiance is thrown on the stage by the song of the Pities at the close of the drama—a faint

radiance—mere footsteps of light upon dark, deep waters; yet it is light, if but a dream of light.

Although there is in him no belief in another world, eternal, beyond the grave, reverent is his attitude before death, of which he feels the solemn majesty, the transfiguring power to a higher beauty, made of awe and infinity; look at the portrait of the dead Eustacia, listen to what he says in his poem *The Casterbridge Captains:*

> "Yet saw he something in the lives
> Of those who had ceased to live
> That sphered them with a majesty
> Which living failed to give." [1]

The presence of death stirs up his yearning to immortal life:

> "In graveyard green, where his pale dust lies pent
> To glimpse a phantom parent, friend,
> Wearing his smile, and 'Not the end!'
> Outbreathing softly; that were blest enlightenment." [2]

In some stanzas of the *Song of the Pities*,[3] adorned with splendid flashes of imagination, he states the belief which he would fain accept: man and his cosmic frame as a living unity progressing to a glorious issue—a creed in striking contrast to his scepticism.

> "Thy systemed suns the skies enscroll
> Obey Thee in their rhythmic roll,
> Ride radiantly at Thy command,
> Are darkened by thy masterhand.
> And these pale, panting multitudes
> Seen surging here, their moils, their moods,
> All shall 'fulfil their joy in Thee,
> In Thee abide eternally.'
>
> Exultant adoration give
> The Alone, through Whom all living live,
> The Alone, in Whom all dying die,
> Whose means the End shall justify."

Throughout *The Dynasts*—and in several of his later poems—we descry that he is tending to an interpretation

[1] *Collected Poems*, p. 43. [2] *id.*, *Wessex Poems*, "*A Sign-Seeker*," p. 44.
[3] *The Dynasts*, p. 523.

of life akin to Browning's: i.e., that earthly imperfection is only a preparation to perfection in a future life, and that pain is the necessary means to lead man on to the right upward path, to lift his soul, to unfold "the wings that sleep in the worm."

"And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
For the fullness of the days? Have we withered or agonized?
Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue thence?
Why rushed the discords in but that harmony might be prized?"[1]

There is something immortal in nature, which the poet, engrossed with his reveries, does not perceive in the spring morning, in budding thicket and building birds and glistening sea, but which God reveals to him in after years, in dim recollections of that scene, where he now feels something divine and everlasting.

"Not much, some may
Incline to say,
To see therein, had it all been seen.
Nay! he is aware
A thing was there
That loomed with an immortal mien."[2]

Nature he loves, looks at her beauty with admiring eyes, loves its very mystery; a brother to suffering things, he would fain assuage their pain; he listens intently to the voice of the great winds, to the silence of the night pregnant with a divine message, gazes with wonder and awe at cloud and flower, waiting for a revelation of the spirit latent under material appearances. In the fine epilogue to his poems he says of himself:

"When the Present has latched its postern behind my tremulous stay—
If I pass during some nocturnal blackness, mothy and warm,
When the hedgehog travels furtively over the lawn,
One may say, 'He strove that such innocent creatures should come to no harm,
But he could do little for them; and now he is gone.

[1] *Abt Vogler*, ix.—cf. *Rabbi Ben Ezra*.
[2] *Collected Poems*, p. 312.

If, when hearing that I have been stilled at last, they stand at the door,
Watching the full-starred heavens that winter sees,
Will this thought rise on those who will meet my face no more,
'He was one who had an eye for such mysteries?'" [1]

It is in his contemplation of the starry darkness that he most intensely perceives—as may be seen in the passage of *Far from the Madding Crowd* where Oak is watching his flock at night—that contrast between nature's vast and lasting splendour and the little, transient misery of man which Young has so finely expressed:

Why this so sumptuous insult o'er our heads?
Why this illustrious canopy displayed?
Why so magnificently lodged despair?

Yet he endeavours to find a unity in the essence and workings of nature and man, a kind of eternal transfiguration in shapes and colours and sounds, a manifold change, but in a unique, wonderful rhapsody. This concept appears in the lyric *In a Museum:*

"Here is the mould of *a musical bird* long passed from light,
Which over the earth *before man came* was winging;
There's *a contralto's voice* I heard *last night*,
That lodges in me still with its sweet singing.

"*Such a dream in Time* that the coo of this ancient bird
Has perished not, but is blent, or will be blending
'Mid visionless wilds of space with the voice that I heard,
In the *full-fugued song of the universe unending.*" [2]

But, side by side with this compassionate feeling, represented by the Pities, we have, as a violent reaction to it, a proud outlook on the universe, crudely expressed by the Spirit Sinister and by the Ironic Spirit; the poet's mind only perceives the shadow of evil on it, regarding it with dissatisfaction, almost with contempt, as an intolerable blunder.[3] From looking at events with vigilant eyes he

[1] *id.*, *Moments of Vision*, "*Finale*," "*Afterwards*," p. 521. [2] *id.*, p. 404.

[3] *Spirit of the Pities:*
Why prompts the Will so senseless-shaped a being?
Spirit of the Years:
I have told thee that It works unwittingly,
As one possessed, not judging.
Ironic Spirit:
Of Its doings if It knew
What It does It would not do.

cannot derive any knowledge of a supernal Wisdom, and see any significance in the doings of men and the workings of nature. To historians like Hume or Carlyle facts are at least obscure symbols of a Law that transcends human reason, to Hardy they are merely idle, meaningless hieroglyphics drawn by a listless, invisible Hand.[1] Universal life, as he apprehends it, may be ruled by an indifferent, unconscious power, or by a wicked, pitiless one, whose cruel wounds no Saviour's hands can heal. With such a conception there can be no love towards the Divine, not even any *Amor Fati*. With such a distrust in the leading Force he cannot bow to his mysterious ways, as a believer does, he cannot entertain, in Patmore's words,

> This subject loyalty which longs
> For chains and thongs
> Woven of gossamer and adamant
> To bind me to any unguessed want, and so to lie
> Between those quivering plumes that thro' fine ether pant
> For hopeless, sweet eternity.

The Immanent Will appears then as a strange and terrible ruler, that stirs in us horror and alarm. "If men are parts of It," says the Spirit Sinister, "I am afraid of them."[2]

[1] *Spirit of the Pities:*
Meet is it, none the less,
To bear in thought that though Its consciousness
May be estranged, engrossed afar, or sealed,
Sublunar shocks may wake Its watch anon?
Spirit of the Years:
Nay. In the Foretime, even the germ of Being,
Nothing appears of shape to indicate
That cognizance has marshalled things terrene,
Or will (such is my thinking) in my space.
Rather they show that, like a knitter drowsed,
Whose fingers play in skilled unmindfulness,
The Will has woven with an absent heed
Since life first was; and ever will so weave.
[p. 2.]

[2] *Spirit of the Pities:*
They are shapes that bleed, mere mannikins or no,
And each has parcel in the total Will,
Spirit of the Years:
Which overrides them as a whole its parts
In other entities.
Spirit Sinister:
Limbs of Itself:
Each one a jot of It in quaint disguise?
I'll fear all men henceforward. [p. 4.]

It is a useless world, or, at least, its purpose is past human reason. The historical period that the poet is portraying in his drama is only the thin edge of the web incessantly woven through space, a tiny bit of the starry, incommensurable woof; the Napoleonic wars are trifling episodes in the epic of the cosmic struggle written in cryptic type in the skies, where birth-flowers and death-flowers are blossoming through æons in the vast shuddering darkness, fiery portents in orchards of gloom, peopled with demons and seraphim. Says the Spirit of the Years:

> "Thus doth the Great Foresightless mechanize
> In blank entrancement now as evermore
> Its ceaseless artistries in Circumstance
> Of curious stuff and braid, as just forthshown.
> Yet but one flimsy riband of Its web
> Have we here watched in weaving-web enorm,
> Whose furthest hem and selvage may extend
> To where the roars and plashings of the flames
> Of earth-invisible suns swell noisily
> And onwards into ghastly gulfs of sky,
> Where hideous presences churn through the dark.—
> Yet seems this vast and singular confection
> Wherein our scenery glints of scantest size,
> Inutile all—so far reasonings tell. [p. 521.]

His mental attitude is somewhat akin to Omar Khayyám's, who, in his fatalistic acquiescence, wavers between scorn of a scornful ruler:

> But leave the wise to wrangle, and with me
> The quarrel of the universe let be:
> And, in some corner of the hubbub couched,
> *Make game of that which makes as much of thee,*

and acknowledgment of a supreme and secret Wisdom:

> The ball no question makes of ayes and noes,
> But right or left as strikes the player goes;
> And He that tossed thee down into the field,
> *He knows about it all—He knows—He knows!*

Yet, what in Omar sounds like trust in his Maker, appears

in Hardy as a very dim and doubtful guess,[1] which can only be lit up by the lamp of a trembling hope:

> "Though times be when the mortal moan
> Seems unascending to Thy throne,
> Though seers do not as yet explain
> Why suffering sobs to Thee in vain;
>
> "We hold that Thy unscanted scope
> Affords a food for final Hope,
> That mild-eyed Prescience ponders nigh
> Life's loom, to lull it by-and-by." [2]

He often stands gazing backwards to a sorrowful past, groping among regrets,[3] raising echoes of beauty fled and perished grace and buried love. And in almost every one of these little lyrics—grey and poisonous as adders—there lurks a sense of infinite bitterness. It is a poetry of thought—of reasoning on feeling, rather than of feeling. Fate appears to him as an unconscious spoiler of human happiness, an inevitable, inexorable Chance, bringing disaster; most of his lyrics are tragedies condensed in a few stanzas, the poet summing up, with intense brevity, a sad event, an irrevocable doom. And the persistent thought of death sheds a ghostly radiance over his lines. Life is to him like an ancient text, a moth-eaten scroll, a half-cancelled manuscript, of which he vainly tries to fill up the gaps, to elucidate the difficult, meaningless passages, suggesting words or twisting the maimed phrase to his liking; but the text remains full of contradictions and inconsistencies. He sees mankind among tormenting, malignant powers; he is confronted by a hard, inexplicable reality; what looks sometimes like a spire of incense in the dusky place where he is groping his way—a breath of incense, a mystic, religious idea—turns out to be a wisp of mist. He endeavours to

[1] *Spirit of the Years:*

> Nay, blame not. For what judgment can ye blame?—
> In that immense unweeting Mind is shown
> One far above forethinking; purposive,
> Yet superconscious: a Clairvoyancy
> That knows not what It knows, yet works therewith. [p. 99.]

[2] *Semichorus I and II of the Pities*, p. 523.

[3] *Collected Poems, Time's Laughing-Stocks, "The Voice of the Thorn,"* p. 216; *At Waking,"* p. 208.

tear out the heart of the mystery, searching the woof of events, the darkest depths of the soul, with an effort constantly renewed; yet in vain. To his mind without faith universal life is a nightmare trance—an evocation of some unknown sorcery—a phantom world which has an only reality: pain. The two main problems he sets to himself are: sorrow—and the plan and goal of the universe; what is the aim of physical, and, above all, spiritual suffering, of the pangs of love and hatred? and whither is tending the development of universal life? what is the hidden purpose of it all? Perhaps everyone, unconsciously, works and suffers to the completion of a mysterious plan, determined by the Immanent Will; and, of course, there is no question of free will in man. And, as regards our knowing power, is reason an insufficient light—or, rather, is it merely a lure of the Will to Live—a toy given us to solve—in an illusory way—the riddle of life?—We have in these lyrics sombre drawings of lives tossed by the wind of circumstance, by the mysterious power that twists together the human souls, or rends them asunder, as the wind does with twigs and boughs in a thicket—binds them together with love, tears them asunder with rivalry and hatred. While to the believer life's dissonances only heighten its harmonies, his agnosticism causes him to perceive merely the discords. The scheme of life is a mournful pattern, and man is a being schooled to resignation by the persistent rod of fate, by an inscrutable law. And yet there are some gleams of a supernal light in these dusky pictures, there are translucencies in the dead opals of these pensive, sad lyrics. This aspiration to the beyond is alive in every poet's heart, however dark his outlook on life may be; from the beauty of nature he can argue a superior, supernal beauty. The poet, as Blake says, "can enter into Noah's rainbow, and make a friend and companion of one of these things of wonder, which always entreat him to leave mortal things."

To aspire to the beyond: there lies the main difference between the mystic and the materialist thinker; while the former feels himself a caged soul, struggles with his earthly fetters and yearns to eternal freedom, the latter is content

in Hardy as a very dim and doubtful guess,[1] which can only be lit up by the lamp of a trembling hope:

"Though times be when the mortal moan
Seems unascending to Thy throne,
Though seers do not as yet explain
Why suffering sobs to Thee in vain;

"We hold that Thy unscanted scope
Affords a food for final Hope,
That mild-eyed Prescience ponders nigh
Life's loom, to lull it by-and-by." [2]

He often stands gazing backwards to a sorrowful past, groping among regrets,[3] raising echoes of beauty fled and perished grace and buried love. And in almost every one of these little lyrics—grey and poisonous as adders—there lurks a sense of infinite bitterness. It is a poetry of thought—of reasoning on feeling, rather than of feeling. Fate appears to him as an unconscious spoiler of human happiness, an inevitable, inexorable Chance, bringing disaster; most of his lyrics are tragedies condensed in a few stanzas, the poet summing up, with intense brevity, a sad event, an irrevocable doom. And the persistent thought of death sheds a ghostly radiance over his lines. Life is to him like an ancient text, a moth-eaten scroll, a half-cancelled manuscript, of which he vainly tries to fill up the gaps, to elucidate the difficult, meaningless passages, suggesting words or twisting the maimed phrase to his liking; but the text remains full of contradictions and inconsistencies. He sees mankind among tormenting, malignant powers; he is confronted by a hard, inexplicable reality; what looks sometimes like a spire of incense in the dusky place where he is groping his way—a breath of incense, a mystic, religious idea—turns out to be a wisp of mist. He endeavours to

[1] *Spirit of the Years:*

Nay, blame not. For what judgment can ye blame?—
In that immense unweeting Mind is shown
One far above forethinking; purposive,
Yet superconscious: a Clairvoyancy
That knows not what It knows, yet works therewith. [p. 99.]

[2] *Semichorus I and II of the Pities*, p. 523.

[3] *Collected Poems, Time's Laughing-Stocks*, "*The Voice of the Thorn*," p. 216; *At Waking*," p. 208.

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To aspire to the beyond: there lies the main difference between the mystic and the materialist thinker; while the former feels himself a caged soul, struggles with his earthly fetters and yearns to eternal freedom, the latter is content

to sit behind the bars, feeling himself, apparently, at home. Hardy is like a man wandering through a dim, terrible country, knowing no whence or whither, yearning to be "anywhere out of the world"; when deeply conscious of his vain effort to understand the universal plan, he bows before the supreme Power, to whose mysterious design everybody and everything is instrumental. In *The Masked Face*, a typical allegory of his mind's attitude, he says:

"I found me in a great surging space,
At either end a door,
And I said: 'What is this giddying place?'—
'It is Life,' said a mask-clad face.
I asked: '*But how do I come here*
Who *never wished to come*;
Can the light and air be made more clear—
And the doors be set wide? They numb
Fast-locked, and fill with fear.'
The mask put on a bleak smile then,
And said: 'O vassal-wight,
There once complained a goosequill pen
To the scribe of the Infinite
Of the words it had to write
Because they were past its ken.'" [p. 490.]

Let us call this attitude of Hardy's mind his hopeful mood; more often he sinks into a desperate agnosticism. And not only his soul and life, but nature itself is an unsolvable riddle.

"When I look forth at dawning pool,
Field, flock, and lonely tree,
All seem to gaze at me...

Upon them stirs in lippings mere:
We wonder, ever wonder, why we find us here!

Or come we of an Automaton
Unconscious of our pains?—

Or is it that some high Plan betides,
As yet not understood,
Of Evil stormed by Good,
We the Forlorn Hope over which Achievement strides?

Thus things around. *No answerer I.*" [p. 58.]

Hardy's utter agnosticism shows more impressive and

striking when compared with Leopardi's; the Italian poet has at least a conviction; he believes in "an ugly power," that, hidden, rules so as to bring all mankind to sorrow, feels that he is destined, together with the world, to an unchanging torture; Hardy would fain entertain some creed, however grim and cruel, but cannot; he does not see any definite purpose for joy or pain in the laws of life:

"If but some vengeful god would call to me
From up the sky, and laugh: 'Thou, suffering thing,
Know that thy sorrow is my ecstasy'—
Then would I bear it, clench myself, and die,
Steeled by the sense of ire unmerited;—
But not so.—
Crass Casualty obstructs the sun and rain,
And *dicing Time* for gladness casts a moan.
These *purblind Doomsters had as readily strown*
Blisses about my pilgrimage as pain." [p. 7.]

Somewhat incongruous to this final despair appears the thought—presupposing a watchful care of both nature and man—that the human soul and the universe are no stranger to each other and both are in a transitory, imperfect condition, waiting for mutation; the poet's mind throws a bridge across the silent abyss between human spirit and star; he has a prescience of a better state, shows confidence in a future change, a transformation tending to an ultimate aim. A star looks down at the poet and says:

"Here I and you
Stand, each in our degree:
What do you mean to do?"

I say: "For all I know
Wait, and see Time go by,
Till my change come."—"Just so,"
The star says: "So mean I." [1]

This thought of a necessary change sometimes leads him up to a feeling of hope, to the view of existence under the beneficent guidance of a principle of harmony, to a contemplation of eternal justice which makes him forget the martyrdom of life, and entertain a belief in the divine order of the world; the perplexing and gloomy conception is

[1] *Human Shows*, p. 1.

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The Poetry Review" January-February 1929.

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mastered; the sky is no more opaque and bare of omens, but translucent and shows him a star, a symbol of hope, almost a sign of victory—a star which he cannot fail to see, a promise of peace, and, perhaps, happiness, an inducement to go on and fight the battle to the end.

"For Life I had never cared greatly,
As worth a man's while;—
In earliest years—why I know not—
I viewed it askance;——
Anew I found nought to set eyes on,
When, lifting its hand,
It uncloaked a star—
And showed its beams burning from pole to horizon
As bright as a brand.
And so, the rough highway forgetting,
I pace hill and dale—
Regarding the vision on high,
And thus re-illumed have no humour for letting
My pilgrimage fail." [1]

From the idea of a universe certainly not in a static perfection, but in growing improvement, Hardy steps on to a more joyful and firmer hope, from a suggestion of the Supernatural to the conception of an Intelligence, until he comes—if not to perceive the divine sagacities of Providence—to see the world as the work of God's hands, Consciousness being the aim of the Unconscious. He cannot remain deaf to these lofty insinuations, to the song arising from the very ground of our being, and, solving all contradictions of the cosmic riddle, his mind, which declines to accept defeat, rises to a transcendental, vital truth, clearly and definitely voiced in the closing chorus of the Pities.[2]

"Now a stirring thrills the air
Like to sounds of joyance there,
That the rages of the ages
Shall be cancelled,
And deliverance offered from the darts that were;
Consciousness the Will informing
Till it fashions all things fair."

F. OLIVERO.

[1] *Collected Poems, Moments of Vision*, p. 505.

[2] *The Dynasts*, p. 525.

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THE POETRY OF HARDY

BEAUTY is the living spirit of Thomas Hardy's work, both in verse and in prose: it shines through his characters, it glows in his images, it burns in his passion. Everywhere, throughout his novels, tales, lyrics, dramas, there breathes an aura of wonder, romance;—as always in true works of art life seems to put on an unearthly shape. His figures belong to eternity. As Blake says: "Nature has no supernatural, and dissolves; imagination is eternity." Hardy perceives in life a sorrowful loveliness; and his mind endows it with a new, original charm—original because he finds out and hears the yet uncaught melodies of life—strange harmonies, and still—though dimly, unconsciously, even unwillingly felt—unmistakable and true.

He looks into present life, in his novels and poems—or into the dusk of years, as in *The Dynasts*, or even into legendary love—as in *The Tragedy of the Queen of Cornwall*—and in all these enigmatic loves and hates, in this bravery and treachery, in this bold defiance and fear, he tries to read the runes of destiny and interpret them. He stands perplexed. Silent are the Heavens to his anxious soul. There is a shadow on his spiritual landscape, a weird cloud is brooding over his thought—the thought of a mind in pain, agony, despair. Life is reflected in his work as in a black obsidian mirror. A sense of doom is always weighing upon him, upon his personages. He is walking along forbidding ways, through shuddering woods, in a black frost; it is a maze of dreariness and desolation, he goes on in depression and anguish, and every step but leads him deeper and deeper into the labyrinth, among the black mirrors of blind pools, utterly alone, on an unknown star. His soul is confronted by the unknowable, his look cannot pierce through the web of life, is baffled by the intricacy of the mysterious ways of God. While to the believer a spiritual light illumines with jewelled rays the whole frame of things, from atom to star, from the clod to where suns are born and die, there is no gleam of truth for the thinker without the aid of Revelation. Death does not count much

Saturday Review Sept 29 1906

A NOTE ON THE GENIUS OF THOMAS HARDY.*

WHY is it that there are so few novels which can be read twice, while all good poetry can be read over and over? Is it something inherent in the form, one of the reasons in nature why a novel cannot be of the same supreme imaginative substance as a poem? I think it is, and that it will never be otherwise. But, among novels, why is it that one here and there calls us back to its shelf with almost the insistence of a lyric, while for the most part a story read is a story done with? Balzac is always good to re-read, but not Tolstoi: and I couple two of the giants. To take lesser artists, I would say that we can re-read "Lavengro" but not "Romola". But what seems puzzling is that Hardy, who is above all a story-teller, and whose stories are of the kind that rouse suspense and satisfy it, can be read more than once, and never be quite without novelty. There is often, in his books, too much story, as in "The Mayor of Casterbridge", where the plot extends into almost inextricable entanglements; and yet that is precisely one of the books that can be re-read. Is it on account of that concealed poetry, never absent though often unseen, which gives [illegible] histories a meaning beyond the [illegible] beneath it like an under-current, [illegible] atmosphere? Facts, once known, are [illegible] facts, stories of mere action gallop through the brain and are gone; but in Hardy there is a vision or interpretation, a sense of life as a growth out of the earth, and as much a mystery between soil and sky as the corn is, which will draw men back to the stories with an interest which outlasts their interest in the story.

It is a little difficult to get accustomed to Hardy, or to do him justice without doing him more than justice. He is always right, always a seer, when he is writing about "the seasons in their moods, morning and evening, night and noon, winds in their different tempers, trees, waters and mists, shades and silences, and the voices of inanimate things". (What gravity and intimacy in his numbering of them!) He is always right, always faultless in matter and style, when he is showing that "the impressionable peasant leads a larger, fuller, more dramatic life than the pachydermatous king". But he requires a certain amount of emotion to shake off the lethargy natural to his style, and when he has merely a dull fact to mention he says it like this: "He reclined on his couch in the sitting-room, and extinguished the light". In the next sentence, where he is interested in expressing the impalpable emotion of the situation, we get this faultless and uncommon use of words: "The night came in, and took up its place there, unconcerned and indifferent; the night which had already swallowed up his happiness, and was now digesting it listlessly; and was ready to swallow up the happiness of a thousand other people with as little disturbance or change of mien."

No one has ever studied so scrupulously as Hardy the effect of emotion on inanimate things, or has ever seen emotion so visually in people. For instance: "Terror was upon her white face as she saw it; her cheek was flaccid, and her mouth had almost the aspect of a round little hole." But so intense is his pre-occupation with these visual effects that he sometimes cannot resist noting a minute appearance, though in the very moment of assuring us that the person looking on did not see it. "She hardly observed that a tear descended slowly upon his cheek, a tear so large that it magnified the pores of the skin over which it rolled, like the object lens of a microscope." And it is this power of seeing to excess, and being limited to sight which is often strangely revealing, that leaves him at times helpless before the naked words that a situation supremely seen demands for its completion. The one failure in what is perhaps his masterpiece, "The Return of the Native", is in the words put into the mouth of Eustacia and Yeobright in the perfectly imagined scene before the mirror, a scene which should be the culminating scene of the book; and it is, all but the words: the words are crackle and tinsel.

What is it, then, that makes up the main part of the value and fascination of Hardy, and how is it that what at first seem, and may well be, defects, uncouthnesses, bits of formal preaching, grotesque ironies of event and idea, come at last to seem either good in themselves or good where they are, a part of the man if not of the artist? One begins by reading for the story, and the story is of an attaching interest. Here is a story-teller of the good old kind, a story-teller whose plot is enough to hold his readers. With this point no doubt many readers stop and are content. But go on, and next after the story-teller one comes on the philosopher. He is dejected and a little sinister, and may check your pleasure in his narrative if you are too attentive to his criticism of it. But a new meaning comes into the facts as you observe his attitude towards them, and you may be well content to stop and be fed with thoughts by the philosopher. But if you go further still you will find, at the very last, the poet, and you need look for nothing beyond. I am inclined to question if any novelist has been more truly a poet without ceasing to be in the true sense a novelist. The poetry of Hardy's novels is a poetry of roots, and it is a voice of the earth. He seems often to be closer to the earth (which is at times, as in "The Return of the Native", the chief person, or the chorus, of the story) than to men and women, and to see men and women out of the eyes of wild creatures, and out of the weeds and stones of the heath. How often, and for how profound a reason, does he not show us to ourselves, not as we or our fellows see us, but out of the continual observation of humanity which goes on in the wary and inquiring eyes of birds, the meditative and indifferent regard of cattle, and the deprecating aloofness and inspection of sheep? ARTHUR SYMONS.

* "The Wessex Novels. Volume I. Tess of the D'Urbervilles." Macmillan's Pocket Hardy. London: Macmillan. 1906.

Daily Chronicle. [illegible] 1906

A POCKET HARDY.

TESS OF THE D'URBERVILLES, in the Pocket Hardy. London, Macmillan. 2s. 6d. and 3s. 6d. net.

By C. Lewis Hind.

But the flashes of reality and beauty! How many they are:

You could sometimes see her twelfth year in her cheeks, or her ninth sparkling from her eyes.

The occasional heave of the wind became the sigh of some immense sad soul, conterminous with the universe in space, and with history in time.

Why it was that upon this beautiful feminine tissue, sensitive as gossamer, and practically blank as snow as yet, there should have been traced such a coarse pattern as it was doomed to receive?

Provisioned by suffering.

I don't mind that; no woman does when it comes to agony-point, and there's no other way.

The Happy Word.

How refreshing, too, is his use of words that are not worn by constant traffic—"accusatory horror"; "the ironical Tishbite"; "a plume of smoke"; "grassed down and forgotten"; "the stopt-diapason note"; "an untenable redemptive theolatry"; "the geocentric view of things"; "boreal light"; "autochthonous idlers"; and many more.

What a life's work is here. Creator of Eustacia Vye; author of the Poems; of "The Dynasts"; of "Tess"; and of that penetrating and haunting study of the uncomfortable way that the artistic temperament works in man—"The Pursuit of the Well-Beloved."

The appeal of most novelists is to the heart; the author of "Tess" drives from the heart to the head. The story of the [illegible] called Tess, the awakening in her of the viewless thing we call the soul, is considered and weighed by a dispassionate [illegible] kings and dairymaids—you and me.

I see that Observer moving here and there in a large building, in every room of which is life in flux and flow, the little infinite troubles of the heart fluttering against ambition and cruelty, joy, and grief, with the other happenings of mortals at tea tables or bedsides. And all the while the thunder growls monotonously, sometimes crashing overhead, when the folk at the tea tables look up and are frightened. The Observer hears all, sees all, and writes on. Someone rises, passes out, and cries at the street corner, "Little children, love one another." Another murmurs, "Fear not, little flock." The Observer dockets the interruptions, and writes on.

The Star. 12 Jan. 1907

"The Works of Thomas Hardy."

I suppose I ought to be ashamed to confess that I have hitherto managed to avoid reading Mr. Hardy's novels. Well, I am not ashamed. It is a mistake to be omniscient before your hair turns grey or falls out. Besides, it is well to save some pleasures up for the days when you have no pleasure in them. I am keeping bits of Balzac and Dumas and Scott for the time when youth turns pale and spectre-thin and dies. I am not sure that I am not extravagant in reading Hardy so recklessly just now. But I comfort myself with the thought he is as re-readable as Meredith. He is one of the few novelists who enable you to choose the end. I am sure that I shall be able to read "Tess of the D'Urbervilles" at least once again. It is a novel that invites dawdling and dilly-dallying. The best novels are those that you do not feel forced to hurry over. The worst novels are those that you scorch through. I go through [illegible] Boothby and Mr. De Quincey as a speed [illegible] beyond the legal limit—about 40 hundred miles an hour. I lost through Mr. Hardy ambling over a jolly chapter one day, [illegible] laying the book aside till I feel bored with life. It is a severe test, for if the book is bad one forgets to remember, or remembers to forget to read it [illegible]

(Continued at top)

Thomas Hardy.

The great author whose portrait is published in this issue of *Alma Mater* has already made good his claim to be something more than a popular novelist. His lot is indeed peculiarly happy in that he has entered during his lifetime into some measure of that recognition which too often is the tardy reward the fickle public pays to genius when it is dead. We live to-day in the continual noise and clamour of the rabble to whom literature is a commercial enterprise; who labour in the incessant zeal to produce commodities which will meet the popular demand and who understand with more knowledge than does them credit the not difficult but degrading art of self-advertisement. Mr. Hardy is not with these. With a courage as admirable as it is rare, he has gone forward in his Art, careless of the beaten track which the mob of gentlemen (and ladies) who write with ease follows. The difficulty, greater for a novelist than for any other literary craftsman, of keeping himself undefiled from the touch of his audience he has found possible. To him belongs that most honourable achievement—to have gained the favour and esteem of the public without having sacrificed one handful of incense on the altar of popularity.

Mr. Hardy, who has turned to poetry and the drama in his later years, is said to have wished to be a poet from the first. However that may be—his first published works were novels; it is his novels that have brought him fame; secure in which he can now turn his skill to those other difficult and more restrained types of literary expression. It is surely not necessary to give a catalogue of his works. We have all read them. If there are any who have not, and wish to start, they may do so with any one except "Jude the Obscure," which is perhaps too imperious in its strain on the intellect and the nervous system to be enjoyed by those who read novels for pleasure solely. There are two sides to his work which must strike every reader—his treatment of Nature and his treatment of those ultimate and insoluble problems of the moral world which throughout the ages have oppressed mankind.

Of the former much has been written. Wessex is already a hunting ground for the relic hunter and the literary tourist from the other side of the Atlantic armed with one of the numerous handbooks to the Hardy country. Many people yearly visit the house in which Tess and Angel Clare spent the night of sorrow before their parting on the morrow of their marriage, and the place on the top of the Downs where from afar Jude saw the shining spires of Oxford. Salisbury Plain and the mystic circles of Stonehenge; Egdon Heath (as it figures in the novels), and the Roman roads which stretch desolately to the eye of the traveller from horizon to horizon; Winchester itself, which has so much that is historical to set it off—all these have gained an added interest and significance from Mr. Hardy's work. And just as you will see schoolboys loitering in Baker Street at nightfall waiting for Watson and Sherlock Holmes, so I am sure that grown men could stand on the eminence outside Winchester and waiting, in fancy that they might see the black flag crawl lazily to the masthead of the Prison, as it did when "the President of the Immortals had ended his sport with Tess." In connexion with Mr. Hardy's treatment of Nature arises, I think, the main characteristics of his style—its fulness which arises from his anxiety to make you feel and see every object just as he felt it and saw it. He will at all costs make you take the same standpoint and gain the same impressions as himself—because that is necessary for your proper appreciation of his story. His descriptions are never otiose, never merely beautiful embroidery in patches. They connect in a curious subtle way the history and minds of his characters with the natural scenes they move in, and the natural forces which enter from their surroundings into their souls.

The other aspect of Mr. Hardy's work which has been mentioned would require infinitely more space than is here at disposal to treat at all adequately. His masters are Heine, Neitzsche, and Schopenhaur; pagan if you will, but sincerely so without any admixture of that arrogance of unbelief which offends in minor writers. To Mr. Hardy, we are trammelled in the unyielding meshes of Fate; for us there is no escape. And though this in his best work rises to those heights of self-pity and fear after a manner which from the time of ancient Greece has been universally regarded as the highest type of tragedy; we are left sometimes with a feeling not so much of a deep and purging sorrow, but rather one of miserable fretting and irritation at the inexorable dictates of that ever present mystery which we call Fate.

Much more might be written on this side of Mr. Hardy's genius. I feel myself unable to compress any ideas on it into a paragraph merely. It is better to bring these few notes to a close. Mr. Hardy has had many followers but none with his genius. Abroad he has equals; in England none—whether he will be the source and example for great novelists here in the future, or whether a return to the more simple fashion of an earlier generation will be the outcome of our present indecisive standpoint in these matters; time, which holds all things in its womb until the appointed day, can alone give the answer we wait for.

MEN AND BOOKS.

12/6/07 ——— D. News

It is a matter for surprise that a magazine with the reputation and standing of the "Monthly Review" should give publicity to such an article as that pretentiously entitled, "The Essence of Hardyism," by Mr. Lindsay S. Garrett. For sheer ignorance, effrontery, and bad writing, masked by a veneer of intellectualism, I have known nothing to equal it in all my reading of the respectable monthly reviews. I should say nothing about such an article as this were it not that the writer clings to certain fashionable and "correct" canons of criticism, and will probably gain a hearing for his intelligible sentences only because most of his sentences are unintelligible.

Fortunately the reputation of Thomas Hardy is not likely to be much injured by a writer who shows himself devoid of the artistic feeling necessary to the appreciation of this great living novelist. What is so remarkable about Mr. Garrett is not that he should venture to differ from such competent critics as Lionel Johnson, but that he should do so upon so slender a basis of evidence. There is nothing in this article to show that Mr. Garrett has read more than one of Mr. Hardy's books, "Far from the Madding Crowd," which was one of the earliest, and by no means one of the best, of his novels. He alludes to three other works, but not in such a way as to suggest that he has troubled to read them. The greatest of Mr. Hardy's novels, "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," "The Return of the Native," and "The Mayor of Casterbridge," are not so much as mentioned. I should not complain if Mr. Garrett claimed only to criticise "Far from the Madding Crowd;" but he professes to be attacking the author's work as a whole.

We are informed that Mr. Hardy's "realism" is like that of Zola, though "unconnected with a sensational issue." A perusal of his greater novels would show that his realism is supremely unlike that of Zola; that the details which he does give us are deliberately selected either to heighten the impression which he desires to convey, or to suggest to us beforehand something which is to develop into tragedy. We are told that his plots are ill-constructed, that in characterisation he is "impotent," that his background is irrelevant, and that, being "deficient in professional earnestness, reverence, and the ability that proceeds therefrom," he "should avoid high subjects." Mr. Garrett argues a priori; but literature, even modern literature, ought not to be treated in this way.

We are told that "Far from the Madding Crowd" could not be successfully dramatised. As if it were ever meant to be dramatised!

"Mr. Hardy has reproduced no vernacular wit." No, Mr. Hardy does not descend to cheap epigrams, and he happens to know that yokels are seldom witty.

There are two extremes of criticism in vogue nowadays. There are those who praise and blame with wild exaggeration without any reference to artistic standards. On the other hand, there are superior persons who think that literature can be reduced to rules and canons and definitions, and they always speak in a solemn way about it, as if art were a hundred times more important than mere life. A few days ago I heard a distinguished critic declare that "literature is concerned with the human emotions," and he proceeded to condemn a certain book because it was not concerned with human emotions. Now I agree that as a rule literature does treat of such emotions, and perhaps that in all cases it has a human reference, because we, as readers, cannot approach anything except as human beings. But against the above dictum I feel there is no person so mean of intelligence that he is not entitled to assert positively, that there are no bounds conceivable to the subject matter of literature. The artist may treat, not only of human nature, but if he likes, of chimeras, or snails, or homunculi. What does matter is the treatment, and even so it has to be remembered that rules were made for artists, not artists for rules. We do not want to hear, for instance, from Mr. Garrett, that "the usage of the great artists in fiction has laid down that . . . . . " unless it can be independently established that such a usage is necessary here and now.

Cutting from the Quarterly Review
Date April 1904

Art. VII.—THE NOVELS OF THOMAS HARDY.

Desperate Remedies (1871); *Under the Greenwood Tree* (1872); *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873); *Far from the Madding Crowd* (1874); *The Hand of Ethelberta* (1876); *The Return of the Native* (1878); *The Trumpet-Major* (1880); *A Laodicean* (1881); *Two on a Tower* (1882); *The Mayor of Casterbridge* (1886); *The Woodlanders* (1887); *Wessex Tales* (1888); *A Group of Noble Dames* (1891); *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891); *Life's Little Ironies* (1894); *Jude the Obscure* (1895); *The Well-beloved* (1897). Collected edition. Seventeen vols. London: Macmillan, 1903.

On a review of the works of the earlier Greek poets Aristotle concluded that dramatists were able sooner to arrive at excellence in diction and characterisation than in the construction of the fable; and English literature, modern as well as ancient, is, by its main defect in narrative art, a lamentable proof of his assertion. From Spenser to Browning and George Eliot, the weak point with us has been the structure of the plot. Dramatic design, like sculpture, is an art not easily to be naturalised in this country. Ben Jonson was one of the first English writers to compose plays with all the incidents regularly interwoven and all the parts interdependent; and for this reason he was considered by some critics, from the Jacobean age to the Restoration period, to be a better dramatist than Shakespeare. Being, however, vastly inferior to several of his contemporaries in the creation and development of character and the genius for dramatic poetry, he failed to excite a general feeling for form and so establish it as a tradition binding upon later writers. Happily, the sense of literary form was, to some extent, popularised in England during the eighteenth century, when the art of painting was also founded in this country; and, on the rise of the novel, there was a possibility of the art of construction being acquired by the English mind, with the splendid examples set before it, first, by the author of 'Clarissa Harlowe,' and then by the author of 'The Bride of Lammermuir.'

Vainly, however. The loss of the sense of literary form was part of the price we had to pay for the magnificent

results of the romantic movement. Coleridge, Hazlitt, and other critics of the romantic school, English and German, must be said to have been collaborators in innumerable badly constructed works of the last century, in that they either exalted the superstition of Shakespeare's consummate skill as a playwright into a sort of literary religion, or brought the inferior plays of other Elizabethan dramatists into fashion by dwelling on detached passages of exceptionally poetic quality and lightly passing over structural defects which should have been treated as intolerable. Owing in no small measure to the influence of these critics, our drama, in an age when great poets were attempting to write for the stage, became, in Beddoes' phrase, 'a haunted ruin,' and soon decayed utterly; while many volumes of fiction, remarkable and, at times, excellent in characterisation, feeling, and philosophy, remained second-rate productions in regard to proportion, compactness, correlation of parts, and general design.

Thackeray, in the first portion of 'Vanity Fair,' and in some later works, effected a marked improvement in the art of novel-writing in England, in construction as well as in style; but to have definitely raised the standard of workmanship in this respect is one of the fine achievements of the author of 'The Return of the Native.' We think it is well to insist upon this, primarily, in attempting even a brief estimate of Mr Hardy's work as a novelist. For although the best writers of the younger generation have followed him in studying conciseness, arrangement, dramatic point, and, in a few instances, purity and expressiveness of style, yet, unfortunately, the average English work remains, not only pitifully inferior to the French, but inferior also in constructive art and vividness to the average American novel of the present day. Hence, as Mr Hardy complained some sixteen years ago, in a valuable essay on the reading of fiction, probably few general readers consider that to a masterpiece in story, no less than to a masterpiece in painting or sculpture, there appertains a beauty of shape capable of giving to the trained mind an equal pleasure.

Yet, no doubt, many persons, who did not care whether or not the English novel in Mr Hardy's hands had become a well-knit drama instead of the string of episodes which

once it was, appreciated other splendid qualities in his rustic stories. First of all, he revealed to them the true romance of country life. He painted for them the woods, downs, meads, and heaths, where the Wessex labourer toiled, in a new and most impressive light. In that happy compromise between an essay in criticism and an anthology, 'Landscape in Poetry,' the late Professor Palgrave remarked in the literary treatment of natural scenery a general development. There was first a simple pleasure in describing single familiar objects; scenes were next lightly drawn as a background in the representation of human actions and manners. Then, as men gathered into cities for the business of life, and repaired to the country for pleasure and refreshment, a form of literature arose in which the loveliness and the benignity of the green earth were extolled. This idea of nature as a fair, beneficent power obtained in Wordsworth's poetry its grandest and most complete expression; and, in an era of extraordinary industrial expansion, it has become one of the commonplaces of European letters.

It implies, however, a conception of the conditions of rustic existence which is not borne out by the experiences of the peasant himself. Not by residing in a thatched cottage, amid verdant fields circled by soft blue hills, does he become a poetic figure. The poetry of his mode of life consists in his having to work for his living in a dependence on the moods of sky, air, and earth, almost as absolute as is the dependence on the moods of sky, air, and water, of mariners in a lone sailing vessel on the high seas. Dawn and darkness, rain, wind, mist, and snow, the frost in winter, the summer drought—these, for him, are personal obstructors or assistants; and every hour of the day he must study and prepare for them. He does not always see in a sunset the beauty which Turner and Shelley have taught us to appreciate; he usually glances at it for another purpose, which Mr Hardy illustrates in the scene in 'The Woodlanders,' where the peasant girl Marty South is planting fir trees.

'She looked towards the western sky, which was now aglow like some vast foundry wherein new worlds were being cast. Across it the bare boughs of a tree stretched horizontally, revealing every twig against the evening fire, and showing in

dark profile every beck and movement of three pheasants that were settling themselves down on it in a row to roost.

'"It will be fine to-morrow," said Marty, observing them with the vermilion light of the sun in the pupils of her eyes, "for they are a-croupied down nearly at the end of the bough. If it were going to be stormy they'd squeeze close to the trunk."'

This is excellent writing, inspired by knowledge and instinct with poetry; but a still finer and more complete revelation of the countryman's point of view is found in 'Far from the Madding Crowd,' where the shepherd, tending his lambing ewes on a winter's night upon the downs, pauses to glance at the sky.

'To persons standing alone on a hill during a clear midnight such as this, the roll of the world eastward is almost a palpable movement. The sensation may be caused by the panoramic glide of the stars past earthly objects, which is perceptible in a few minutes of stillness, or by the better outlook upon space that a hill affords, or by the wind, or by the solitude; but whatever be its origin, the impression of riding along is vivid and abiding. . . . The Dog-star and Aldebaran, pointing to the restless Pleiades, were half-way up the Southern sky, and between them hung Orion, which gorgeous constellation never burnt more vividly than now, as it swung itself forth above the rim of the landscape. Castor and Pollux, with their quiet shine, were almost on the meridian; the barren and gloomy Square of Pegasus was creeping round to the north-west; far away through the plantation, Vega sparkled like a lamp suspended amid the leafless trees, and Cassiopeia's chair stood daintily poised on the uppermost boughs.

'"One o'clock," said Gabriel.

'Being a man not without a frequent consciousness that there was some charm in this life he led, he stood still after looking at the sky as a useful instrument, and regarded it in an appreciative spirit, as a work of art superlatively beautiful.'

This shepherd is a type of the countryman described by Mr Hardy with the greatest sympathy. Mr Hardy's conception of the English peasant is somewhat partial, but most striking; and we fancy that such characters as Gabriel are depicted with the greatest sympathy because they clearly reflect a main idiosyncrasy of their author in noble conjunction with a higher quality of soul. They are supposed to unite the enervating

fatalism that distinguishes Mr Hardy with a power of silent, grand endurance in adversity that a Roman Stoic would have admired. For instance, the scene in 'Far from the Madding Crowd,' from which we have just cited a passage, closes with a spectacle of disaster. The flock of ewes, representing Gabriel's savings after years of toil and thrift, and his prospect of acquiring a position of independence and comfort, are worried by a young dog into a chalk-pit, at the bottom of which he discovers them stretched all dying or dead. Misfortunes accumulate, as they often do in Mr Hardy's novels. Gabriel finds himself rejected by the woman he loves, poverty-stricken, and unable to obtain any sort of employment. Then, with that healthy disinclination to grieve over past sorrows, which amounts almost to temperamental cheerfulness in the generality of the English labouring classes, the shepherd goes in search of work.

'He had sunk from his modest elevation as pastoral king into the very slime-pits of Siddim; but there was left to him . . . that indifference to fate which, though it often makes a villain of a man, is the basis of his sublimity when it does not.'

Mr Hardy's heroes are all drawn on the same model. Gabriel Oak in 'Far from the Madding Crowd,' John Loveday in 'The Trumpet-Major,' Giles Winterborne in 'The Woodlanders,' are men of a similar nature. 'Michael Henchard' in 'The Mayor of Casterbridge,' though lacking their inexpressible tenderness and purity of heart, is related to them in passive fortitude; and Clym Yeobright in 'The Return of the Native,' joins their family. A student and a sojourner in cities, he has, at first, a facility of expression, a radiant activity, and a resilience of mind, which exclude him from the company of Mr Hardy's heroes; but when he turns again for peace of soul to the rugged heath where he was born, he at last becomes as subdued in spirit as the strong rustic men who have been taught to go softly all their days, and to whom the sad art of renunciation is almost an instinct. Here, at least, Mr Hardy's poetic exaggeration of nature's utter sternness, as opposed to Wordsworth's equally poetic exaggeration of her benignity, leads to the conception of a fine type of character.

The disciplinary influence of country life supplies

indeed, one of those grandly constructive ideas which give to the Wessex novels their singular unity and consistency. It underlies the whole of the characterisation. While Mr Hardy's heroes are countrymen in whom the dumb passiveness of the peasantry under affliction rises into a moral grandeur of resignation, his men of the meaner sort are either townsmen or persons of urban culture. Manson, Sergeant Troy, Wildeve, Fitzpiers, D'Urberville, and some characters in the shorter tales, have many traits in common; and, through not having been chastened by a life of labour under natural conditions, they strangely resemble those women in Mr Hardy's novels who, belonging to the yeoman or better class, lead a sheltered, pleasant existence. Men and women, their characteristics can be given almost in the same words. They have somewhat of the moral poverty of children in that their reason and their propensities have no reciprocating influence; so they live on present emotions, and regard neither the past with understanding nor the future with circumspection. Though possessing as little real energy of resistance to fate as Mr Hardy's peasants, they have a buoyancy of spirit arising from the unrestrained sensibility which is the moving force of their lives; and, stimulated by whatever pleasing object chance places in their way, they are full of dangerous activity. The effect is that the men are refined sensualists and the women light-hearted coquets, who, in a search for personal admiration or fine shades of feeling, often become the victims of an overwhelming passion. Irresponsible, fascinating creatures, these 'children of a larger growth' are sometimes transfigured into incarnations of the tragic power of love, blind, disastrous, and ineluctable in its working. As wayward as fate itself, they invade, for some light whim, the settled lives of men whose calmness is but the equilibrium of great powers, and leave them terribly disordered. They are singularly apt to make the first advances; yet with all their eagerness for admiration they remain indifferent to the deep inarticulate devotion which they are at pains to excite. The tumult and not the depth of soul they approve, and thus they are won lightly by the voluble inconstant men whose failings they more innocently and weakly reflect.

If Mr Hardy is often ungenerous, sometimes cruel, and

occasionally unpleasant in his characterisation of women, yet there are to be found in his works heroines nobly conceived. Marty South in 'The Woodlanders,' Elizabeth-Jane in 'The Mayor of Casterbridge,' and Tess of the D'Urbervilles, are tenderly drawn. They are girls who have had to work in the woods and fields, instead of living comfortably indoors. Sharing the hard conditions and rough experiences of such men as Winterborne and Gabriel Oak, they, too, have learnt to suffer greatly in silence, and to regard happiness, in accordance with their author's sad philosophy, as 'but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain.' They accept misfortunes with the same fatalism, with the same passivity, rising often in moments of trial to similar stoic greatness. Of these women, Marty South is the most typical; for Elizabeth-Jane, that 'dumb, deep-feeling, great-eyed creature,' is rescued from her lot by adoption and marriage, while Tess, with her beauty and her strange career, appears a queen of tragedy rather than a peasant girl. In outward seeming Marty South, dressed in her working clothes, illiterate, poor, and unlovely, is merely a pitiable figure; yet Mr Hardy makes her one of the most exquisite and touching characters in the Wessex novels. Personally, we are moved more by her story than by that of Tess; it is related more simply and naturally, from the time when first we meet her, toiling wearily at a man's work all the day and most of the night, and selling, for her sick father's sake, the long beautiful hair that redeemed her from plainness, until at last we leave her, standing above the grave of the man whom she loved, but who had given her no word of love in return. How finely, for instance, are her feelings revealed as she talks to him, when they are planting fir trees, and he, absent in mind, is anxiously devising how to win another woman. Marty holds up the little trees while he spreads the roots towards the south-west in order, as he explains, to give them a strong hold-fast against the great gales from that quarter.

'"How they sigh directly we put 'em upright, though while they are lying down they don't sigh at all," said Marty.

'"Do they?" said Giles. "I've never noticed it."

'She erected one of the young pines into its hole, and held up her finger. The soft musical breathing instantly set in, which was not to cease night or day till the grown tree should

be felled—probably long after the two planters had been felled themselves.

'"It seems to me," the girl continued, "as if they sigh because they are very sorry to begin life in earnest—just as we be."

'"Just as we be?" He looked critically at her. "You ought not to feel like that, Marty."'

The thought is, indeed, a sad one; but Mr Hardy is a true enough observer to depict many a charming group of rustics with that *joie de vivre* which, whatever may be said to the contrary, is still to be found in this country. Interpreting everything in the terms of his own profound melancholy, he tries to explain that the more humble classes are alone sufficiently ignorant of the real conditions of life to be persistently cheerful; but, though his philosophy is false, he is loyal to facts. The truth is that 'Merry England' is a land that still exists, though hidden for some centuries in obscurity. The English are a spirited people, sentimental and yet humorous at heart; the aristocratic *morgue* of the uppermost social strata, the puritanic rigour which still keeps many of the middle and lower-middle classes somewhat sour of mind, are alike foreign to the genius of the race. It is naturally of a light-hearted and rather improvident nature, living for the day, and trusting to its strength to provide for the morrow when the morrow comes. The fatalism which Mr Hardy exaggerates as a trait of our rural population is simply an inveterate cheerfulness of soul, which causes them to accept a misfortune as a thing that was to be, in order to avoid constant anxiety for the future and vain regret for the past. Doubtless, this disposition to escape from worry makes at times more for serenity of mind than for strength of character; and Mr Hardy, besides ascribing it, as we have remarked, to some of his worst personages, notices it as a weakness in Joan Durbeyfield. Yet, after all, such a disposition is not wholly bad.

There was a time, we fancy, when the Wessex peasantry infected Mr Hardy himself with somewhat of its gaiety. Among his types of character there is one occurring so frequently as to be remarkable. Sometimes it is a rustic lad, Clym Yeobright or Edward Springrove, sometimes it is a rustic maid, Fancy Day or Grace Melbury, who

returns home with urban manners and habits of thought; but in all cases these acquirements yield at last to an instinctive delight in country life, and the reversion brings with it happiness. Happiness Mr Hardy must in some measure have attained when, leaving London, he rediscovered Wessex, and found to his hand materials of such value as no writer since Scott had possessed. Here was a land untouched by modern unrest, the land of an ancient, youthful-hearted people, where the passions were frank and simple, where the outlook on all things was natural and wholesome, and life ran still calmly in the channels of instinct and custom.

That charming pastoral, 'Under the Greenwood Tree,' the earliest of the Wessex novels, must have been composed by a man who was moved to joy in escaping from the smoke and business of the city, and in discerning the true field for displaying the great powers within him. What knowledge does a town-bred child in playtime acquire like the knowledge of wild life which a rustic lad obtains almost unwittingly? On what fund of picturesque tradition can a citizen draw like the tales of courtships at maypole dances, of midsummer-eve rites, and other immemorial usages, of sorcerers and witches, smugglers, press-gangs, and preparations along the English shore against Napoleon's armies, which one Dorsetshire man tells us he heard, some fifty years since, from a gentle old dame born ere England went to war with her American colonies? And if few writers of the present day have gathered such material for their works, none other has cultivated so carefully gifts naturally so fine. A relish for old rustic ways and forms of speech of genuine Saxon idiom, a turn for story-telling, a rare perception of the character of a landscape as well as of a person, a quick sense of humour, and that intensity of imagination and feeling that stamps the real poet, these were the foundations of a genius which has been developed by study. One of the most dramatic of novelists—except on the rare occasions when he is melodramatic—Mr Hardy has endued with life and colour all that a student of antiquities, history, architecture, and folk-lore could discover relating to his native county; and with wonderful accuracy, lightness, and charm he has revealed the poetry with which the ways of the woodman and the farmer, the

neatherd, the shepherd, and other rural figures, are still surrounded.

Surprising, indeed, is Mr Hardy's achievement as a whole. In an age when, to very refined people, England appeared to be a vast manufactory, with a population that had lost the poetry of tradition without acquiring the feelings of true culture, when Spain and Italy were cherished as the sole countries of Europe untouched by the general vulgarity of material progress, he found in the daily occupations of the peasantry of a neglected agricultural province the matter for a series of idylls and tragedies which, for their qualities of romantic emotion and poetic charm, can almost be compared with the Waverley Novels. The popularity of Scott Mr Hardy can never dream of attaining, by reason of the unwholesomeness of his view of life; but on no English novelist of modern times, except perhaps Mr George Meredith, were the gifts necessary for greatness more abundantly bestowed.

Mr Hardy's dramatic skill is especially displayed in 'The Return of the Native,' which, in construction, is his best work. The informing idea of this novel consists of a subtle study of the influence which a vast stretch of rugged heath exercises over the minds of its inhabitants. The feelings, now of passionate attachment, now of blank weariness, which it provokes in the principal characters in the story give rise to the conjuncture of events involving the catastrophe. The tale opens, therefore, with an impressive picture of Egdon Heath. So impressive is it that many a reader will forget sooner the conduct of the action itself than the scene of the action—a swarthy wilderness extending between

> 'the distant rims of the world,' like the 'original of those wild regions of obscurity which are vaguely felt to be compassing us about in midnight dreams of flight and disaster.'

Interest in the bleak expanse centres at last on its crowning point, a hill surmounted by a tumulus, whereon, in the twilight, is seen the figure of a stately woman standing black and solitary against the pale wintry horizon like the very genius of Egdon Heath. Thus strikingly is the heroine of the tragedy presented. She

hastens away, leaving the scene clear for a company of rustics who ascend and prepare a November bonfire. While it burns, and flames answer it from the heights encircling the heath, the chorus of peasants, with slow roundabout ways of expression and a homely ignorance as delightful as the racy shrewdness and humour which it serves to enhance, discuss things generally and their neighbours in particular, and so, like the two servants in the opening scene of a modern play, introduce the chief characters and explain the action.

The heroine, Eustacia Vye, is a sombre, passionate woman, distantly related, perhaps, to Flaubert's Emma Bovary, but with a nature of a larger and more imperious cast. She is a personification of romantic revolt, not of romantic sentimentality. The native of a gay, busy seaside town, she languishes in the solitude and monotony of the great heath, where circumstances compel her to abide; and to interrupt the tediousness of life she lightly fascinates the innkeeper, Wildeve, in the absence of a man of a finer nature on whom she might exercise her power. For she holds 'that love is a doleful joy; yet she desires it as one in a desert would be thankful for brackish water.'

The hero, Clym Yeobright, is a man after Mr Hardy's own heart. Born and bred on Egdon Heath, he leaves his home to see the cities of the world and win a competency if not a fortune; but soon, discontented with town life, he returns with an intellectual relish and affirmed affection for his native wilds such as Thoreau scarcely felt for Walden. In his views he anticipates in some measure the resurgence of Rousseauism, now associated with Tolstoy's name. The retrogression to the austerity and wholesomeness of peasant life, enforced by such culture as should help men, not to rise in the world, but to glorify a life of rustic toil with knowledge and imagination, is now his ruling idea.

Eustacia, aware of his return, and prompt for any mad prank that will disperse the tedium of existence, calls upon him disguised as one of the mummers who perform at his mother's house the old miracle-play of St George. Yeobright penetrates her disguise, and is affected by her unconventional conduct, as perhaps she wishes him to be. In the event the lady wins the hermit, and marries

him. Egdon Heath thereupon begins, like some dark spirit of tragedy working in secret behind the scene, to govern their destinies. Passion subsides into domestic love; and in Eustacia there revives the longing for the distractions of a life in town. It was partly for this purpose that she married; and she employs all her charms in order to prevail upon her husband to take her away from the dreary waste. Yeobright, however, is reluctant. Stronger almost than his affection for his wife is this idealist's hatred of the town and love of the country. He wants nothing save to live and die with her on Egdon Heath, passing his days in the delight of study, and teaching the labouring men around him to appreciate intelligently their happy state. Eustacia at first cannot but respect his sincerity and ardour; still, the weariness frets her. At length her husband, having strained his eyes by study, puts into practice his professions in the matter of rustic toil, and, dressed in peasant's clothes, cuts furze all day on the waste, returning home at evening too tired for anything but sleep. His wife is divided between revolt and despair. This antagonism of temperaments, which threatens to end in an elopement, is brought to a sadder conclusion by the suicide of Eustacia.

The two ideas in 'The Return of the Native,' the disturbance created in a little sequestered community by the arrival of some educated child of the soil, and the influence exercised upon the mood of the inhabitants by the nature of their surroundings, occur in different forms in other novels of Mr Hardy. By means of the first idea he exhibits the contrast between the older generation of country people and the younger. The second idea enables him to trace, in the course of the narrative, the gradual eradication of the new views of life and the new restlessness by the old pervasive influences, and so to bring the story, when he will, to a pleasant close, as in the first and gayest of the Wessex tales, 'Under the Greenwood Tree.' This work, and the much later novel, 'The Woodlanders,' are variations on the same theme, the one idyllic, the other tragical. Even the heroines resemble each other more than the generality of sisters. Both are the heiresses of countrymen of the old school, both are educated in town, the stories opening with their return to the little knot of cottages in sylvan

surroundings where they were born, the typical scene of Mr Hardy's novels, a spot

'outside the gates of the world, where may usually be found more meditation than action, and more listlessness than meditation; where reasoning proceeds on narrow premisses, and results in inferences wildly imaginative; yet where, from time to time, dramas of a grandeur and unity truly Sophoclean are enacted in the real, by virtue of the concentrated passions and closely-knit interdependence of the lives therein.'

Soon after their arrival, Fancy Day, in 'Under the Greenwood Tree,' and Grace Melbury, in 'The Woodlanders,' find awaiting them a pair of lovers, a rustic lad and a man of the higher class. Were they acquainted with the principles underlying Mr Hardy's system of characterisation, they would not, of course, hesitate in their choice. However, Fancy, a light-hearted girl, touched by the spirit of spring moving in the woods around her, chooses the villager, Dick Dewy, a sprightly son of nature; and the idyll ends with a nightingale singing their epithalamium. Grace, with a temperament more slowly and more deeply moved, allows herself to be chosen by Dr Fitzpiers. On her marriage, misfortunes quickly follow. Their house stands in a region of woodlands and apple-orchards; and close by are the homes of Grace's rustic lover, the cider-maker Giles Winterborne, of Marty South, Giles's affectionate companion, and of Mrs Charmond, a wealthy young widow acquainted with Fitzpiers.

Mrs Charmond and Fitzpiers are society representatives of Eustacia Vye and Wildeve, but they look somewhat unreal in comparison when they emerge into the bright clear air of Wessex. There, owing to a common feeling of lassitude which affects those who dwell in the country without knowing an oak from a beech, they drift from coquetry into passion. The elopement which threatened in 'The Return of the Native' now takes place; in the sequel the man grows weary and returns home. Mr Hardy, however, cannot tell this sort of story half as well as some foreign writers; nor does he show his real power in any kind of society novel, of which he has written several that are, for him, rather successful essays in the art of sinking. Of course, one estimates a

man by his best works; and these careful, studied, but somewhat uninspired tales serve merely to show that Mr Hardy, like most writers, has his limits. But when, as in 'The Woodlanders,' he combines a matchless story of rustic life with this inferior work, the result is irritating. It produces the effect of a Millet inserting into the foreground of a masterpiece, such as 'Les Glaneuses,' the figures of an actress and a physician, painted in some fashionable style of portraiture. The required contrast between the primitive ways of the woodlanders and the manners of the modern world might surely have been obtained by more simple means.

Indeed, this is done in the character of Grace Melbury. Her husband's desertion moved her but little. Having made love to her merely as the most striking figure in a dull landscape before Mrs Charmond appeared, he had wooed but the artificial lady in her, touching her heart even less than she had touched his. Left to herself, a deep change comes over her; and the spirit of her native place enters her soul. The sylvan life about her rouses that in her nature which is stronger than her acquired sense of refinement; and, craving for the homely existence of her own people, even in its roughness and defects, she turns on her father crying:—

'"I wish you had never, never thought of educating me. I wish I worked in the woods like Marty South! I hate genteel life, and I want to be no better than she."

'"Why?" said her amazed father.

'"Because cultivation has only brought me inconveniences and troubles. . . . If I had stayed at home I should have married——."'

For Winterborne, whom she had forsaken just as he was reduced to poverty—Gabriel Oak was treated in the same manner—now appeared to her, as he stood by his cider-presses, clothed in the poetry of nature.

'He looked and smelt like Autumn's very brother, his face being sunburnt to wheat-colour, his eyes blue as cornflowers, his sleeves and leggings dyed with fruit-stains, his hands clammy with the sweet juice of apples, his hat sprinkled with pips, and everywhere about him that atmosphere of cider which, at its first return each season, has such an indescribable fascination for those who have been born and bred among the

orchards. Her heart rose from its late sadness like a released bough; her senses revelled in the sudden lapse back to nature unadorned . . . and she became the crude country girl of her latent early instincts.'

After a meeting, in which, by an accident, Grace's new feelings for Giles are displayed, they determine to keep apart from one another. Winterborne, more profoundly saddened by the untoward disclosure which increases Grace's unhappiness than by his own suffering, past and present, falls ill; and the story deepens into tragedy as Grace, driven to seek his aid in a moment of trouble, unwittingly brings about his death. Her husband has returned; and, in trying to take refuge with a distant friend, she finds herself homeless on a rainy night. She resorts to Giles in her dismay; and he, rising up from a sick-bed, surrenders his house to her, and, sleeping outside under a damp shelter of hurdles, is brought back dying. The tale closes with a reconciliation between Fitzpiers and his wife, which is not very convincing. Yet Mr Hardy more than redeems this defect by the description, on the last page, of Marty South mourning over the grave which Grace and she, in companionship of grief, used to dress every week with flowers, and which now she remains to tend alone. The girl's words have much of the music and all of the pathos of Sir Ector's lament over Launcelot in 'Le Morte d'Arthur.'

'She entered the churchyard, going to a secluded corner behind the bushes, where rose the unadorned stone that marked the last bed of Giles Winterborne. As this solitary and silent girl stood there in the moonlight, a straight slim figure, clothed in a plaitless gown, the contours of womanhood so undeveloped as to be scarcely perceptible, the marks of poverty and toil effaced by the misty hour, she touched sublimity at points, and looked almost like a being who had rejected with indifference the attribute of sex for the loftier quality of abstract humanism. She stooped down and cleared away the withered flowers that Grace and herself had laid there the previous week, and put her fresh ones in their place.

'"Now, my own, own love," she whispered, "you are mine, and on'y mine; for she has forgot 'ee at last, although for her you died. But I—whenever I get up I'll think of 'ee, and whenever I lie down I'll think of 'ee. Whenever I plant the young larches I'll think that none can plant as you planted;

and whenever I split a gad, and whenever I turn the cider wring, I'll say none could do it like you. If ever I forget your name, let me forget home and heaven! . . . But no, no, my love, I never can forget 'ee; for you was a good man, and did good things!'

Yes, Marty South and Winterborne are truly heroine and hero in 'The Woodlanders'; even the situation of Grace Melbury and Fitzpiers is presented, we think, with more dramatic force in an earlier work, 'Far from the Madding Crowd.' The analogous characters in this book, being nearer to the rustic life, are drawn with greater vividness. Of all the educated women in the Wessex novels who move among the peasantry with unrest and sorrow in their wake, Bathsheba Everdene, the mistress of Weatherbury farm, is the most mischievous and fascinating. With finer intellectual powers than Mr Hardy commonly allows to women, and with a wild disposition that prevents her from obtaining the position of governess, which Fancy Day and Grace Melbury demurely fill, she is armed with an authority denied to Eustacia Vye. The disasters which must hence ensue are adumbrated on the appearance at Weatherbury farm of the brilliant Sergeant Troy, a man who, more infected with urban ideas than Bathsheba, matches her in his failings, even to a touch of masterful brutality answering to her capriciousness. Mr Hardy's favourite crisis is then reached. It is that which occurs when Fancy Day and Maybold, Eustacia and Wildeve, Grace Melbury and Fitzpiers, encounter one another. In each case the position is worked out in an astonishingly different manner, but never with such power as in 'Far from the Madding Crowd.' Like Grace Melbury and Fitzpiers, Bathsheba and Troy, with but little in common save their weaknesses, marry. Then in their path the menacing figure of Boldwood, Bathsheba's rejected wooer, and the pathetic form of Fanny Robin, Troy's old love, stand like ministers of fate. The catastrophe—Troy's desertion of his wife, and Boldwood's murder of Troy—though effected in a manner rather roundabout, is a natural consequence and a finely tragical one.

By way of contrast the story is lightened with a series of beautiful pictures representing the varied business of

farming in Wessex at a period when the continuity with the past remained in all things unbroken.

'Between the mother, with her fast-perishing lumber of superstitions, folk-lore, dialect, and orally transmitted ballads, and the daughter, with her trained National teachings and Standard knowledge under an infinitely Revised Code, there was a gap of two hundred years as ordinarily understood. When they were together the Jacobean and the Victorian ages were juxtaposed.'

The difference between Joan Durbeyfield and her child Tess represents the difference in social atmosphere between 'Far from the Madding Crowd' and 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles.' There are other works of Mr Hardy, equally fine, but upon the excellences of which we cannot, in this brief estimate, enlarge, such as 'The Trumpet-Major,' 'The Mayor of Casterbridge,' and the 'Wessex Tales,' in which the same conditions prevail as in 'Far from the Madding Crowd.' They are pictures of rustic life prior to 1851, when newspapers and modern thought, railways and industrialism began to effect in the minds and the mode of living of the peasantry a change, hastened by the result of the Education Act of 1870.

Mr Hardy seems to be divided in opinion with regard to the alteration. The poet and lover of nature contend in him with the equalitarian. The fruits of even legitimate ambition have been purchased at the price of contentment and simple pleasures. In gaining by agitation better wages and a position of greater independence, the peasants have forfeited something more than picturesqueness of appearance. In 'Far from the Madding Crowd' the memorable Joseph Poorgrass and his companions had certain intimate and kindly relations with the land upon which they laboured, not possessed by their less dependent successors. Living and dying on the spot where their forefathers had lived and died, they lost the character of hirelings in that of natural guardians; and, although none of them would have been so terribly bold as the new man, Andrew Candle, who lost a place by telling the squire that his soul was his own, they acquired, by way of compensation, that sympathy with their surroundings, that sense of long local participation, which are not least among the pleasures of life.

In the period described in 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' Wessex is a different world. The revolution is not entirely the result of that superficial instruction obtained at school, which, as Mr Hardy has shown, is often counteracted by natural influences. New economic conditions have perturbed the character of the working classes. The migrations of Tess, of Car Darch and her companions, of Marian and other milkmaids, from Trantridge to Talbothays, from Talbothays to Port Bredy and other places, and their frequent changes of occupation, denote these altered conditions. The agricultural labourers now remove almost yearly from farm to farm; and they are acquiring some of the virtues and many of the defects of a nomadic race. The women are relinquishing their modest grace for the rollicking airs of factory hands; and the men are cultivating urban vulgarities in place of that humorous simplicity which makes Mr Hardy's rustics of the older generation so akin to Shakespeare's. Moreover, domestic stability having an immense influence on conduct, uncertainty of residence is resulting in laxer morality and more cynical views of the duties of life. The gradual erosion of local feeling and local peculiarities, the disappearance of small tradesmen like John Durbeyfield, who were the main force in village life, have now obliterated so much of the old romance of Wessex that one can partly understand how it was that Mr Hardy, in the prime of his genius, brought to a conclusion his novels of country life with 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles.'

Before 'Tess' was written there seemed scarcely a rustic employment which Mr Hardy had not described. The multitude of countrymen who peopled the Wessex of his novels were distinguished from one another almost as much by their different occupations as by their characters. Happily, he had not dealt with the one pastoral scene which in a century of utilitarian change had lost little of its natural picturesqueness. It may be that for a long time Mr Hardy delayed to depict a rural dairy in order to avoid direct comparison with the author of 'Adam Bede.' Truly, no little courage was required to intrude upon a scene over which the indomitable Mrs Poyser reigned. The creator of such a rival to that lady as Joseph Poorgrass need not, perhaps, have hesitated overmuch; but Mr Hardy had grown too melan-

choly to retain in all its fulness the genius for richly humorous work which informed his earlier stories. He was now so deeply immersed in philosophy that cheerfulness was quite excluded.

When at last he elected to be measured against his predecessor in the novel of country life, it was surprising how much his tale had in common with hers, and yet how superficial were the points of resemblance. It might be thought that they had been designed merely to bring out the more profound dissimilarity in treatment. The coincidence of 'The Chase,' as the spot where Tess and Hetty Sorrel, girls of about the same age, were wronged by the young squires, may not, for instance, have been unintentional; while Alec D'Urberville's combination of the parts of the seducer and the preacher appears almost to be a travesty of the characterisation of the older writer. But instead of inviting us to study 'the psychology of a canary bird,' as George Eliot says of Hetty Sorrel, Mr Hardy asks us, in what may be an indignant rehandling of the theme, to follow a more harrowing tale, whose pathos is enhanced by the nobility and patience of the chief sufferer. It must be admitted that in pathetic effect 'Tess' is superior to 'Adam Bede.' Mr Hardy, in his sympathy with his heroine, exhibits at times an intensity of emotion not surpassed by either of the Brontés. In concluding the tale, not by the murder of the child and the transportation of the mother, but by the death of the seducer at the hand of the wronged woman, he wrought it into a more tragic narrative, evolving the tremendous conception of fate.

On the other hand, George Eliot's story is more simple, more natural, and far more probable. If her fault is want of art, Mr Hardy's defect is artificiality. Too much machinery is employed in 'Tess' to bring about the catastrophe; and, in the latter part of the tale especially, disaster follows disaster in so close and yet so disconnected a manner that all sense of verisimilitude is destroyed. There is an analogous defect in his characterisation. Keeping to the general law of human nature, George Eliot traced in Hetty Sorrel and Arthur Donnithorne a common weakness of character which, without the machinations of a third person, would result in a terrible calamity. Believing, as Mr Hardy in his

earlier works appears to have been inclined to believe, that

> 'In tragic life, God wot,
> No villain need be! Passions spin the plot;
> We are betrayed by what is false within,'

she was able to spare even Donnithorne some traits of nobility, and so to surround the miserable couple in their career of sin and crime with natures, such as Dinah Morris, Adam Bede, and Mrs Poyser, so sweet, strong, and sane that Mrs Carlyle, who was no easy critic of humanity, said she felt herself in charity with the whole human race after reading the book. Mr Hardy, having chosen to illustrate an exception to the law in question, and an exception so extraordinary as to be almost incredible, was unable, in creating his characters, to preserve the balance and the general truth to nature which is found in 'Adam Bede.' Having conceived a strangely immaculate heroine, who, from no impulse of her own, proceeded from fornication to adultery, and ended in murder, he had first to make her life such a succession of unmerited troubles, misfortunes, and disasters, as dispels the credulity of the most sympathetic reader; and next to encompass her about with so many persons of nefarious or brutal, vicious, weak, or scornful natures —Alec D'Urberville, Farmer Groby, Car Darch and her companions, the Durbeyfields and their landlord, Angel Clare's brothers and Angel Clare himself—that verisimilitude in the characterisation, as well as verisimilitude in the fable, is sacrificed to pathetic effect.

Yet, with all its deficiencies, its lack of balance, and its sophistical irrelevancies, 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' remains a melodramatic novel excelling in wild pathos and poetic beauty. This poetic beauty is not a little due to the fact that the work is one which reveals most completely Mr Hardy's unrivalled genius in the description of country life and natural scenery. Possessing one of the soundest and most expressive of styles in modern prose, Mr Hardy is singularly felicitous in purely descriptive passages. As in his diction he combines plainness and concreteness of statement with great imaginative force, so in depicting natural scenery he unites keen, fresh observation of characteristic details with a broad

poetic interpretation of the general aspect. Intimate knowledge, clearness of outline, variety and novelty in points of view, are some of his secondary qualities. He has little in common with the writers of the profusely picturesque order. He prefers images which convey emotions to images which create pictures in the mind; yet he can, when he will, excel a naturalist like Richard Jefferies, and equal Ruskin in the grandeur of his thought. To illustrate this let us quote two descriptions of snowstorms in 'Far from the Madding Crowd' and 'Tess.'

'Winter, in coming to the country hereabout, advanced in well-marked stages, wherein might have been successively observed the retreat of the snakes, the transformation of the ferns, the filling of the pools, a rising of fogs, the embrowning by frost, the collapse of the fungi, and an obliteration by snow. This climax of the series had been reached to-night on the aforesaid moor, and for the first time in the season its irregularities were forms without features; suggestive of anything, proclaiming nothing, and without more character than that of being the limit of something else —the lowest layer of a firmament of snow. From this chaotic skyful of crowding flakes the mead and moor momentarily received additional clothing, only to appear momentarily more naked thereby. The vast dome of cloud above was strangely low, and formed, as it were, the roof of a large dark cavern, gradually sinking in upon its floor; for the instinctive thought was that the snow lining the heavens and that encrusting the earth would soon unite into one mass without any intervening stratum of air at all.'

The scene of the snowstorm in 'Tess' is also another Wessex upland, where the heroine worked in the winter:—

'After this season of congealed dampness came a spell of dry frost, when strange birds from behind the North Pole began to arrive silently on the upland of Flintcomb-Ash; gaunt spectral creatures with tragical eyes—eyes which had witnessed scenes of cataclysmal horror in inaccessible polar regions of a magnitude such as no human being had ever conceived, in curdling temperatures that no man could endure; which had beheld the crash of icebergs, and the slide of snow-hills by the shooting light of the Aurora; been half blinded by the whirl of colossal storms and terraqueous distortions; and retained the expression of feature that such scenes had engendered. . . . Then one day a peculiar quality invaded

the air of this open country. There came a moisture which was not of rain, and a cold which was not of frost. It chilled the eyeballs of the twain (Tess and her fellow-labourer, Marian), made their brows ache, penetrated to their skeletons, affecting the surface of the body less than its core. They knew that it meant snow, and in the night the snow came. . . . The snow had followed the birds from the polar basin as a white pillar of a cloud, and individual flakes could not be seen. The blast smelt of icebergs, arctic seas, whales, and white bears, carrying the snow so that it licked the land, but did not deepen on it. . . . The air, afflicted to pallor with the hoary multitudes that infested it, twisted and spun them eccentrically, suggesting an achromatic chaos of things.'

Since writing 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles' Mr Hardy has averted his eyes from the spectacle of the world, and devoted himself to the study of Schopenhauer and von Hartmann. In the 'Well-beloved' the elements of idealistic philosophy, and not the facts of life, are his theme. When a man loves a woman it is not the woman herself whom he loves, but the image of her in his own mind. To Mr Hardy this subjective notion is the veritable Well-beloved. The various women by whom his metaphysical hero is attracted are merely blank forms which the glorious ideal animates for a moment and then reduces into insignificance as she passes into another shape, carrying along with her the affections of the constant-inconstant lover. There is, of course, no probability either in characterisation or plot; in the track of this hypothesis we pass into that misty region beyond space and time where, in Doudan's phrase, we hear the choir of ideas celebrating the impossible on the ruins of reality.

'Jude the Obscure,' that much discussed work, is another of Mr Hardy's essays in metaphysics. It is a wild attempt to realise in narrative form some current pessimistic theories, by imagining a world where all women will have an innate aversion against marrying and bearing children; and where, even when children are born, they will resort to suicide out of an instinctive desire not to live. These ideas are embodied in Sue Bridehead, and the son of Jude. Mr Hardy would have us believe that Jude Fawley came from Mellstock where lived that more amiable idiot Tommy Leaf, and the

gallant Dick Dewy. As a matter of fact, Jude is a native of that part of the Utopia of the philosophers over which the author of 'The Metaphysics of Love' dismally reigns. He is Schopenhauer's perfidious lover 'seeking to perpetuate all this misery and turmoil which otherwise would come to a timely end.' Lest the shade of the great hypochondriac should thereby be offended, Jude is also intended to personify the more gratifying idea of the rapid extinction of the human race by degeneration. Some very unpleasant details are introduced in order to make the account of this ghastly hallucination resemble a novel of misery, but vainly; the principal characters and the main events, as described, are as far removed from the realities of this world as are those in the 'Well-beloved.' What is but too real and apparent is the frame of mind of which the work is an expression. One sees that the professed humanitarian in our day can excel Swift himself in appalling misanthropy.

Besides revealing Mr Hardy's impressions of his fellow-creatures and the universe generally, 'Jude the Obscure' is significant in regard to his relation to contemporary thought. The author represents the younger and more febrile generation who inherited the ideas of the rationalists by whom George Eliot was disciplined in thought. The world, in their view, was not under divine governance; men, instead of being immortal souls, were mere animals, which would at last yield up their place on earth to some lower type better fitted to survive in more degrading conditions; in the meantime, they said, let us promote righteousness and do our best to make the lot of the survivors of our race as pleasant as possible. From their peculiar standpoint they were illogical but human; Mr Hardy is inhuman but logical. They denied the evidence of the religious instincts because these were something that could not be measured by the utilitarian standard of immediate pleasure and immediate pain; he applied the same test of rationalistic enquiry to the ethical code to which George Eliot, for example, had adhered amid all her doubts. 'Jude the Obscure' is his answer to his teachers. He replies, in effect, that since, as you say, the travail of the whole human race, of the whole world, leads in the end to nothing, duty, morality, and life itself to me are nothing: 'What is it all but a

trouble of ants?' as Tennyson said, speculating on the same idea only to reject it vehemently.

> 'Then bitter self-reproaches as I stood
> I dealt me silently,
> As one perverse—misrepresenting Good,
> In graceless mutiny.'

So Mr Hardy writes in one of his poems. And in this passage he shows, at least, that, despite the inordinate power which a sensibility so quick, delicate, and acute as not to be entirely healthy, exerts over his imagination, he can at times perceive something else than a soul of evil in things that the rest of men account to be good. Yet we must admit that, even from the verses in question, it is evident how completely his judgment is swayed by feeling, for it was only in the æsthetic rapture of gazing at a lean black stretch of moorland, transfigured in the light of a setting sun, that he was moved to accuse himself so sternly.

It seems to be a difficult matter to avoid extravagance of statement in attempting a comparison between a modern novelist, however brilliant, and a great poetic dramatist. Jane Austen and Shakespeare—how often, since Macaulay, have these disparate names been coupled together! And now, after reading in the letters of the late Lord Acton that if Sophocles had lived in the light of our culture George Eliot might have had an equal, we really hesitate to mention a grand poet of such ancient and universal fame as Euripides in conjunction with a modern prose-writer like Mr Hardy. Yet we think that some curious points of resemblance in temper of mind and general outlook on life might be discovered in the novels of the author of 'Jude the Obscure' and the plays of the dramatist whose 'Hippolytus the Veiled' was resented on moral and artistic grounds by the Athenians.

In their work an intense love of natural beauty, a dislike to town life and a warm regard for the honest home-keeping countryman, are alike observable; and in their women of strange, passionate, and irresponsible temperament, they display a similar type of heroine. Each of them, one would say, was a man of vehement but partial sympathies and brooding imagination, with

an intellect of a high but receptive order, given to cl udy speculation based more upon emotions than upon ideas. In happier circumstances, with their genius for expressing romantic feelings with exquisite realistic art, they might both have clothed the most commonplace truths of life with fresh beauty and significance, as Mr Hardy, indeed, has done in his first and best novels; but, children of an age of scepticism, their religious instincts were soon sophisticated; and their works then reflected, in a want of nobility and balance, the continual inward struggle between the wild idealism of their hearts and the despondency of their minds. Yet the Greek poet never went do far as Mr Hardy goes in blind revolt. Like most thinking men, he found that man by logic alone cannot discover for what end he was born, with a soul in which goodness was mingled with evil, into a world where suffering was inseparable from joy. Instead, however, of finding in this inability of our understanding to explore the unsearchable ways of Providence a cause for excessive disparagement of the worth and the purpose in life, Euripides, the rationalist, in his last and strangest drama, wrote, in a passage splendidly paraphrased by Mr Gilbert Murray:

'Knowledge, we are not foes!
I seek thee diligently;
But the world with a great wind blows,
Shining, and not from thee;
Blowing to beautiful things,
On, amid dark and light,
Till Life through the trammellings
Of Laws that are not the Right,
Breaks, clean and pure, and sings,
Glorying to God in the height!'

Mr Hardy's philosophic creed is that of a sentimental materialist; he is a mighty yet restless and woeful spirit, a prince of modern English literature by reason of his earlier works, but in certain of his later works a misdirected force.

Edward Wright.

Thomas Hardy.

The great author whose portrait is published in this issue of *Alma Mater* has already made good his claim to be something more than a popular novelist. His lot is indeed peculiarly happy in that he has entered during his lifetime into some measure of that recognition which too often is the tardy reward the fickle public pays to genius when it is dead. We live to-day in the continual noise and clamour of the rabble to whom literature is a commercial enterprise; who labour in the in-
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mystic circles of Stonehenge; Egdon Heath (as it figures in the novels), and the Roman roads which stretch desolately to the eye of the traveller from horizon to horizon; Winchester itself, which has so much that is historical to set it off—all these have gained an added interest and significance from Mr. Hardy's work. And just as you will see schoolboys loitering in Baker Street at nightfall waiting for Watson and Sherlock Holmes, so I am sure that grown men could stand on the eminence outside Winchester and waiting, in fancy that they might see the black flag crawl lazily to the mast-head of the Prison, as it did when "the Presid-

MEN AND BOOKS.

12/10/07 ——— D-News

It is a matter for surprise that a magazine with the reputation and standing of the "Monthly Review" should give publicity to such an article as that pretentiously entitled, "The Essence of Hardyism," by Mr. Lindsay S. Garrett. For sheer ignorance, effrontery, and bad writing, masked by a veneer of intellectualism, I have known nothing to equal it in all my reading of the respectable monthly reviews. I should say nothing about such an article as this were it not that the writer clings to certain fashionable and "correct" canons
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declare that "litera-
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tions," and he proceeded to condemn a certain book because it was not concerned with human emotions. Now I agree that as a rule literature does treat of such emotions, and perhaps that in all cases it has a human reference, because we, as readers, cannot approach anything except as human beings. But against the above dictum I feel there is no person so mean of intelligence that he is not entitled to assert positively, that there are no bounds conceivable to the subject matter of literature. The artist may treat, not only of human nature, but if he likes, of chimeras, or snails, or homunculi. What does matter is the treatment, and even so it has to be remembered that rules were made for artists, not artists for rules. We do not want to hear, for instance, from Mr. Garrett, that "the usage of the great artists in fiction has laid down that . . . . . ," unless it can be independently established that such a usage is necessary here and now.